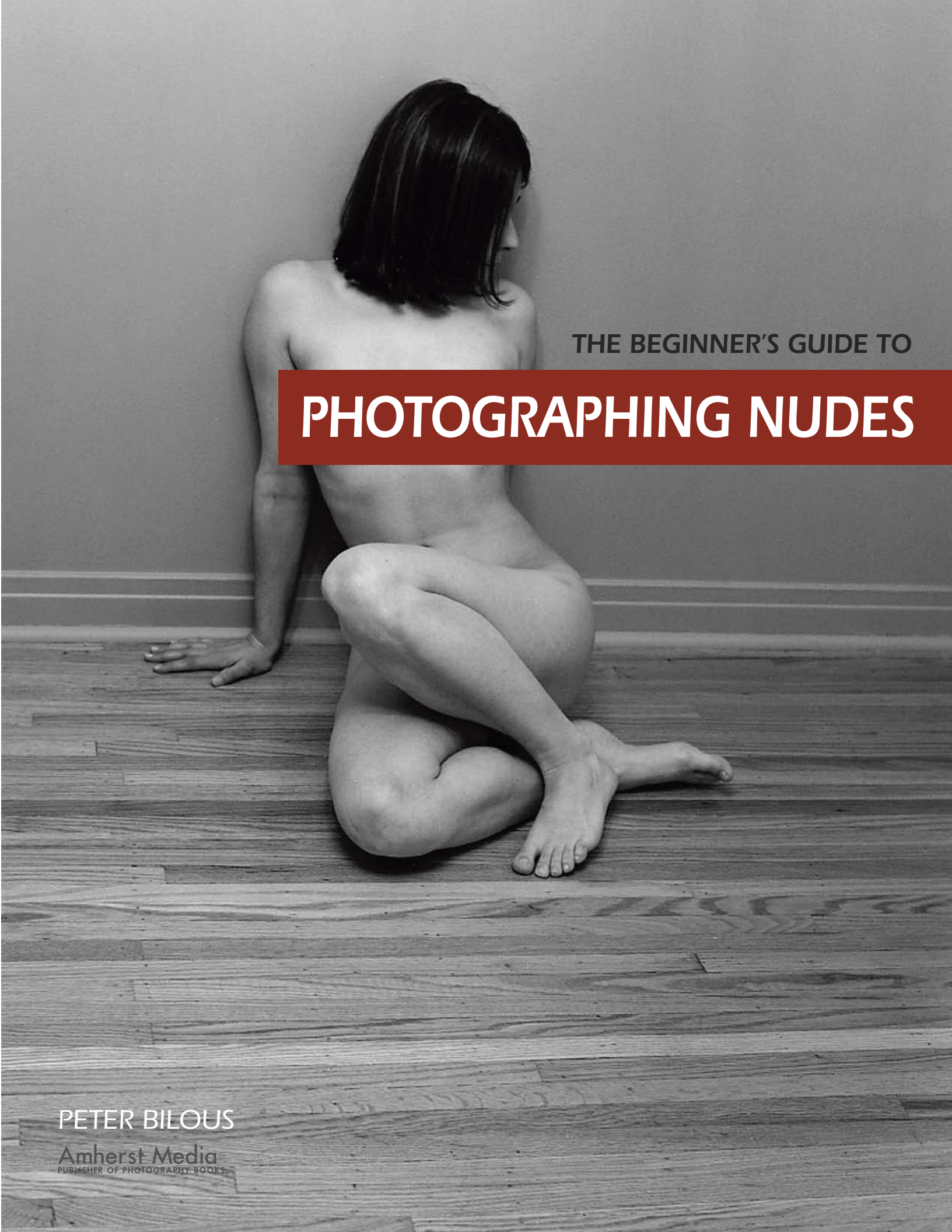

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

PHOTOGRAPHING NUDES

PETER BILOUS

Amherst Media®
PUBLISHER OF PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS

About the Author

Peter Bilous was born and raised in Rochester, NY, where he currently resides. Although largely self taught, he did study photography at the Rochester Institute of Technology and has also attended several portraiture and nude photography workshops. He is also an instructor and has taught black & white darkroom workshops, as well as a location portraiture class.

Peter's work is a permanent part of the Elizabeth Collection at Artisan Works in Rochester. Other exhibits include Image City Gallery, The Center at High Falls, Kodak Park's main lobby, and the VARGA Gallery in Woodstock, NY. His images have appeared in various publications, including *The New Nude* magazine and the Woodstock Photography Workshops catalog.

He currently shoots commercial and artistic nudes in his studio in Rochester and at various locations around upstate New York.

View the companion blog to this book at: http://photographingnudes-bilous.blogspot.com/
Check out Amherst Media's other blogs at: http://portrait-photographer.blogspot.com/
http://weddingphotographer-amherstmedia.blogspot.com/

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Published by:
Amherst Media, Inc.
P.O. Box 586
Buffalo, N.Y. 14226
Fax: 716-874-4508
www.AmherstMedia.com

Publisher: Craig Alesse
Senior Editor/Production Manager: Michelle Perkins
Assistant Editor: Barbara A. Lynch-Johnt
Editorial Assistance from: Sally Jarzab, John S. Loder, Carey Ann Maines

ISBN-13: 978-1-58428-263-1
Library of Congress Control Number: 2009903890
Printed in Korea.
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction

When I was about ten years old, I received my first camera as a gift from a family friend. I don't remember much about the camera or about the person who gave it me, but I still vividly recall how it made me feel, because I still experience those same feelings every time I pick up a camera. It's exciting just holding a camera in my hands, but I was hooked the first time I pressed the button. Being able to capture what I see through the viewfinder, and then share that vision with others, is something that still thrills me today! As I got older, I learned more about photography, obtained better equipment, and created higher quality photographs, but the joy of that little boy with his first camera has always remained a part of me.

Since I have been a photographer for most of my life, I have explored many different subjects with my camera. Like many people, my first subjects were landscapes and other found objects. I photographed flowers, trees, rocks, buildings, and anything else that happened to cross my path. Since I had a "good camera" that took good pictures (no credit to the poor photographer), I was also elected to take all of the family pictures. I didn't mind, but didn't really find those images very satisfying. Those images did, however, help me learn more about photographing people. They also helped me hone my lighting skills.

It wasn't until I attended my first nude photography workshop in 1999 that I discovered my real passion in photography. Shooting the nude female form inspired me like no other subject ever had. I had always admired beautiful nude images and photographing nudes was something that I had always wanted to try, but I didn't really know how to get started. After somewhat nervously signing up for the workshop, I wasn't sure what to expect, but I was worried for no reason. The experience far exceeded my expectations. Not only did I create images that I loved, but the

models were great to work with, which really contributed to the positive experience of the workshop.

I have done hundreds of nude photo shoots since that first workshop and still love the experience. The human body presents almost limitless opportunities for creating great images, and I have been exploring them ever since. In addition, meeting and photographing all of the wonderful people who have modeled for me has been a great experience. It's much more fun for me than photographing inanimate objects.

Since I strive to produce unique images, I do not limit myself to a single approach to photography. I shoot both in the studio and on location and love to experiment with lighting and photographic techniques. I also enjoy photographing many different types of people. My images run the gamut from fine art to glamour, nude portraits to experimental. The more I explore, the more possibilities I discover. Although I have photographed both male and female nudes, I find the female form much more interesting and inspirational and now exclusively work with female models.

Like many photographers, I love to look at other people's work for inspiration. There have been many diverse influences on my photography, including both old masters (like Edward Weston, Helmut Newton, and Ruth Bernhardt) and more recent photographers (such as Robert Farber, Stephan May, and Petter Hegre). Although I admire their work and sometimes use one of their images as a starting point for a shoot, I strive to create my own unique images. When I show a model a photograph by another photographer, I tell her that the photograph is just a concept to use as a starting point. Our goal is not copy the image but to be inspired by it to create our own work.

I always admired beautiful nude photographs and thought that it would be something that I would like to try—I just didn't know where to start. Perhaps you have the same desire, which is why you picked up this book. I hope that by sharing my experiences, I can help others get started photographing nudes. As you read through the pages of this book and look at my photographs, I hope that you find the inspiration to start creating great nude images of your own.

I would like to thank everyone who encouraged me to pursue my dream of getting a book published. I would also like to acknowledge the other photographers who share my passion and who were willing to share their knowledge and experiences with me. Special thanks to the people at Amherst Media, who took a chance on an unknown author/photographer and allowed me to share my work and ideas with you. But most of all, I would like to thank all of the wonderful people who have modeled for me over the years. You have been my inspiration; without you, this book would not have been possible. And a final acknowledgement to the long forgotten family friend who gave a small boy a gift that started a life-long passion.

1. Types of Nude Photographs

The nude has been photographed ever since the beginnings of photography. In fact, nudes are one of the first subjects portrayed in most art forms. We seem to be drawn to human figures, both as artists and observers. Despite the popularity of nude images, everyone has their own opinions when it comes to nude photographs. One person's art is another's pornography. Attitudes can also change over time. What was once considered scandalous may now be widely accepted. Factors such as gender, age, culture, and upbringing may also play a role in the perception of a nude image.

Although the perception of nude photographs varies from person to person, it is still useful to think about the types of nudes you want to create. Not only will it help you to plan your shots, but it can also direct you to the right kind of models for the style of the photographs you plan to shoot. Certain models may be better at artistic nudes than they are at glamour. Some models may really enjoy experimenting while others may prefer a more straightforward approach. Deciding on a style for your next shoot can help you to find the right model.

Some images, such as this one, don't fit neatly into a category. Shoot what you like and let others decide what to think of your work.

Since the perception of nudes is highly subjective, what follows is strictly my opinion. These are basically just some ideas to get you started thinking about what you'd like to shoot. Feel free to differ with me and to apply your own standards. Also, realize that some images don't fit neatly into a category, so don't get too concerned about labels. And don't let others discourage you from pursuing your own path. Just because it doesn't mesh with their idea of what a nude image should be, doesn't mean that it's not a good image. Some people will like your photographs and some will not; that's just the nature of artistic endeavors. The important thing is that you create images that you love.

■ Don't let others discourage you from pursuing your own path.

Artistic and Fine-Art Nudes

Defining Qualities. Artistic and fine-art nudes are classic nude images that you would see in an art gallery. Many artistic images are done in black & white, though color photographs have gained increasing acceptance as art. Some people consider these to be the only acceptable types of nude images and dismiss

Although many artistic images are done in black & white, color photographs have gained increasing acceptance as art.

Artistic nudes are photographs that you would see in an art gallery.

all others. In fact, in one workshop I attended, the instructor led a discussion about nude *vs.* naked and why only nude was acceptable. I didn't agree with that position or really see the distinction, but as I've said, everyone has their own opinion.

There are also those who try to differentiate between artistic and fine-art nudes, but to me they are basically the same—at least the approach and intent of the photographs are the same. The emphasis is more on shape and form. The photographer is less interested in photographing a person and more interested in using the human body to create art. If there is anything that defines an image as fine art, it is in the quality of the craft applied. Fine-art prints are usually meticulously printed on high quality stock. They can be archival digital images or may have been shot on film and printed by hand, in the darkroom, by a master printer using the best materials. In my opinion, the attention to detail and quality of the print is what makes a photograph fine art.

■ If there is anything that defines an image as fine art, it is in the quality of the craft applied.

Look at the photographs of Ruth Bernhard, Edward Weston, and Robert Farber to see some great examples of artistic nudes. In fact, Edward Weston's

photograph of a nude facedown in the sand is considered by some to be the best nude photograph ever made. While reading a biography of Edward Weston, written by Charis Wilson (Weston's wife and the model for that image), I was surprised to learn that it was a spontaneous image. She was just enjoying a sunny day on the sand. Edward saw an incredible image and captured it for all of us to enjoy.

So what exactly is an artistic nude? There seems to be no clear answer to that question. I have been involved in many spirited discussions, in several different workshops, trying to address that question. One instructor, who likes to shoot abstract nudes, told us that we were shooting "girly pictures," because the models were recognizable in our images. Although that seemed a little harsh, defining an image as artistic does seem to largely depend on posing and composition. So how do you decide?

So what exactly is an artistic nude? There seems to be no clear answer to that question.

Posing. The poses for artistic images tend to be more conservative and reserved than in other types of nude photographs. Some people think that showing the pubic area is not permissible in artistic images, though I have seen that assumption challenged in many beautiful images. Others feel that if you have eye contact with the model, then it does not qualify as an artistic image. Again, I don't believe that is always true.

Lighting. How light is used would also seem to be a key component in the creation of an artistic image. In fact, lighting is a crucial aspect of *any* photo-

The emphasis in artistic nude photographs is often more on shape and form, rather than on the person.

The poses for artistic images tend to be more conservative and reserved than in other types of nude photographs.

graph. However, the masterful use of light is one of the elements that *define* an artistic image. Light can be used to reveal shapes and lines that would not exist without the proper lighting. If this is the type of photography that interests you, you really need to become a student of light. As you move through the world, study the light in many different situations. Try to understand what effect it has on an object. In our case, the object is a human body, but light has the same ability to reveal shapes and create form, regardless of the object.

■ The creative use of a setting can also be used to produce an artistic image.

Settings. Although many artistic images are shot against a plain background, the creative use of a setting can also be used to produce an artistic image. Think about how you are using the setting. Is there a beautiful woman standing by a waterfall trying to look her best, or is she engaged as a part of the setting? The first image is likely to be perceived a glamour shot and the second as an artistic photograph. Glamour is about human beauty within the setting. In an artistic image, the model becomes an integral part of the location. She is one of the rocks or trees, she belongs there, she is part of her surroundings. However, in-

LEFT—Integrating the model into the location is a challenge, but it can create beautiful images if done successfully.

FACING PAGE—Although many artistic images are shot against a plain background, the creative use of your setting can also produce an artistic image.

tegrating the model into the location is more difficult than it seems. You may need to start with glamour-style images until the setting starts to speak to you. A talented, experienced model may know how to pose in the setting—but not always. A newer model will most likely need your guidance to find the right artistic poses. If you can, scout out the location ahead of time and try to have some ideas before you bring your model there. New ideas will probably occur to you as you are working, but it is helpful to have some ideas to get you started.

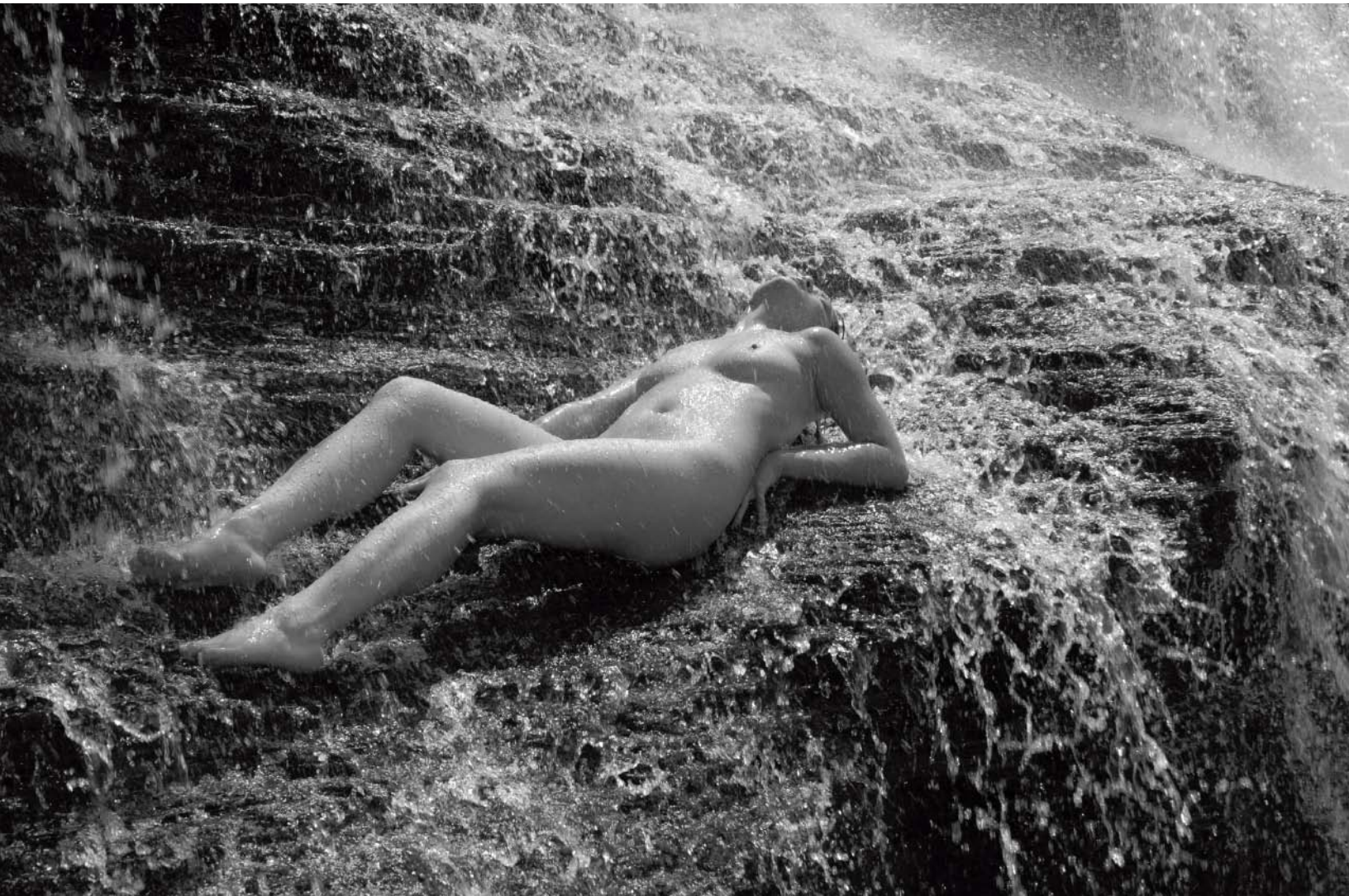
■ A newer model will most likely need your guidance to find the right artistic poses.

Not all locations need to be classically beautiful to create interesting images. While places of natural beauty are great shooting locations, places such as old abandoned buildings, graffiti-covered walls and railroad tracks can work just as

well. It depends on the mood you want to capture in your photographs. You can also use light to create your own location. One of my favorite shots was done in dark hallway with just an open door as a light source. Keep an open

LEFT—*Is there a beautiful woman standing by a waterfall trying to look her best? This is likely to be perceived as glamour.*

BELOW—*If the model is engaged as a part of the setting, then the photograph will probably be regarded as an artistic nude.*



ABOVE—Not all locations need to be classically beautiful to produce strong images. Even trash can be used as an artistic element.

LEFT—Simple locations can be used effectively. One of my favorite photographs was shot in a dark, empty hallway.

mind and open eye and you'll be surprised by all of the great locations that exist all around you.

Glamour Nudes

Defining Qualities. Glamour nudes are alluring images of beautiful women. The first thing that comes to mind is the photographs in men's magazines such as *Playboy*. Many photographers love to shoot glamour. And why not? You are photographing beautiful women in beautiful settings. Since this is such a popular genre, it's really difficult to produce unique images or to have your own personal style. After being exposed to so many glamour images, I think that it's easy to be influenced by, and to subconsciously imitate, what you have seen in other photographers' work.

One approach to developing a personal style is to try to find models that have "non-standard" beauty. After all, beauty truly is in the eye of the beholder (or in this case, the photographer). Beautiful women come in all shapes and

sizes, so try to photograph models you find beautiful but whom others may overlook. Hopefully, your enthusiasm for their beauty will come across in the images.

Most nude models are familiar with *Playboy*-style nudes. The question is, where do you draw the line between glamour and art, or glamour and pornography? (Of course, some people consider *Playboy* to be pornography, so for them there is no line to draw.) It gets to be very subjective, and I doubt any two people would have exactly the same criteria. A subtle change can make an art image into something that may be considered glamour. The same is true for having a glamour shot cross the line into pornography.

If the intention of the image is clearly sexual, then it will probably be considered pornographic. On the other hand, a beautiful shot of a beautiful woman, even if it is explicit, may be considered a glamour shot. You really need to set your own limits for glamour images and be sure to be very clear with your model. A model expecting to do *Playboy*-style nudes may be thinking of the *Playboy* of twenty years ago. The best way to try to avoid misunderstandings is to show her some examples of the types of images you'd like to shoot and be sure that she understands your goals for the session.

Settings. Another challenge is to find a unique location for your glamour images. It's hard to think of any setting that has not been used for glamour nudes. Certainly, bedroom shots have been done to death, as have photographs of sexy women with sporty cars. A beautiful woman can shine in any setting, so use your imagination. Maybe there is an old cave or an interesting rooftop you can use. Perhaps there is something unique about your home or property. Also think about how your model will fit into your setting. A sweet and innocent model may not be your best choice to shoot in a cave; a fierce model may not be best for a field of wildflowers—or maybe she would. Perhaps you could use the seeming incongruity to create something unique.

Posing. It used to be that you would not show a woman's vulva in a *Playboy*-style glamour image, but that no longer seems to be the case. Now that many models shave their pubic hair, any shot from the front will reveal this area. Even the limits on open-leg shots have changed over time, making the current trends and standards somewhat difficult to evaluate. Just compare men's magazines from twenty years ago to today's magazines and you will see the changes. Again, I think it gets down to the intention of the image and the perception of the viewer. You can control the first but not the second.

Lighting. Lighting for glamour images tends to be standard portrait-type lighting. Remember that you are trying to photograph someone in the most flattering light, so keep that in mind when setting up your lighting in the studio or on location. If you want the model to look her best, a makeup artist can be very helpful, especially if there are going to be multiple looks. Glamour im-

FACING PAGE—Glamour nudes are usually alluring images of a beautiful woman.

■ A beautiful woman can shine in any setting, so use your imagination.

A subtle change can make an artistic image (top) into a glamour photograph (bottom).

ages also tend to be manipulated more extensively in postproduction than most other types of images, to remove any "imperfections." In my opinion this is often overdone to the point where the model looks more like a mannequin than a person, but some people like that look. Before you get carried away, remember that real people have pores, moles, and freckles; it's okay to leave some in the image.

■ Remember that real people have pores, moles, and freckles; it's okay to leave some in the image.

Commercial Nudes

Defining Qualities. Commercial nude images are photographs that you would see in a magazine ad or on a billboard. They are generally glamour-style images

and are usually implied nudes (at least in the United States they are). This style of image is popular for soap and skin lotion ads, plus beer advertising. The models are usually extremely beautiful and engaging. After all, the purpose is to get you to look at the ad.

Lighting. This is a highly competitive professional field and would be extremely difficult for a beginner to break into. However, it can be a useful learning experience to try to imitate some of these shots. Look through your favorite magazines, clip out your favorite ads, and try to figure out how they were done. You can sometimes get a clue about the lighting setup by looking into the model's eyes. Many times, the lights are reflected in her eyes (and sometimes the photographer is, too). One glamour photographer told me that most of his images are self-portraits. He uses a six-foot octabank softbox and has to stand in front of it to take his photographs. If you look into his model's eyes, you can see his silhouette in front of the large, bright octagon.

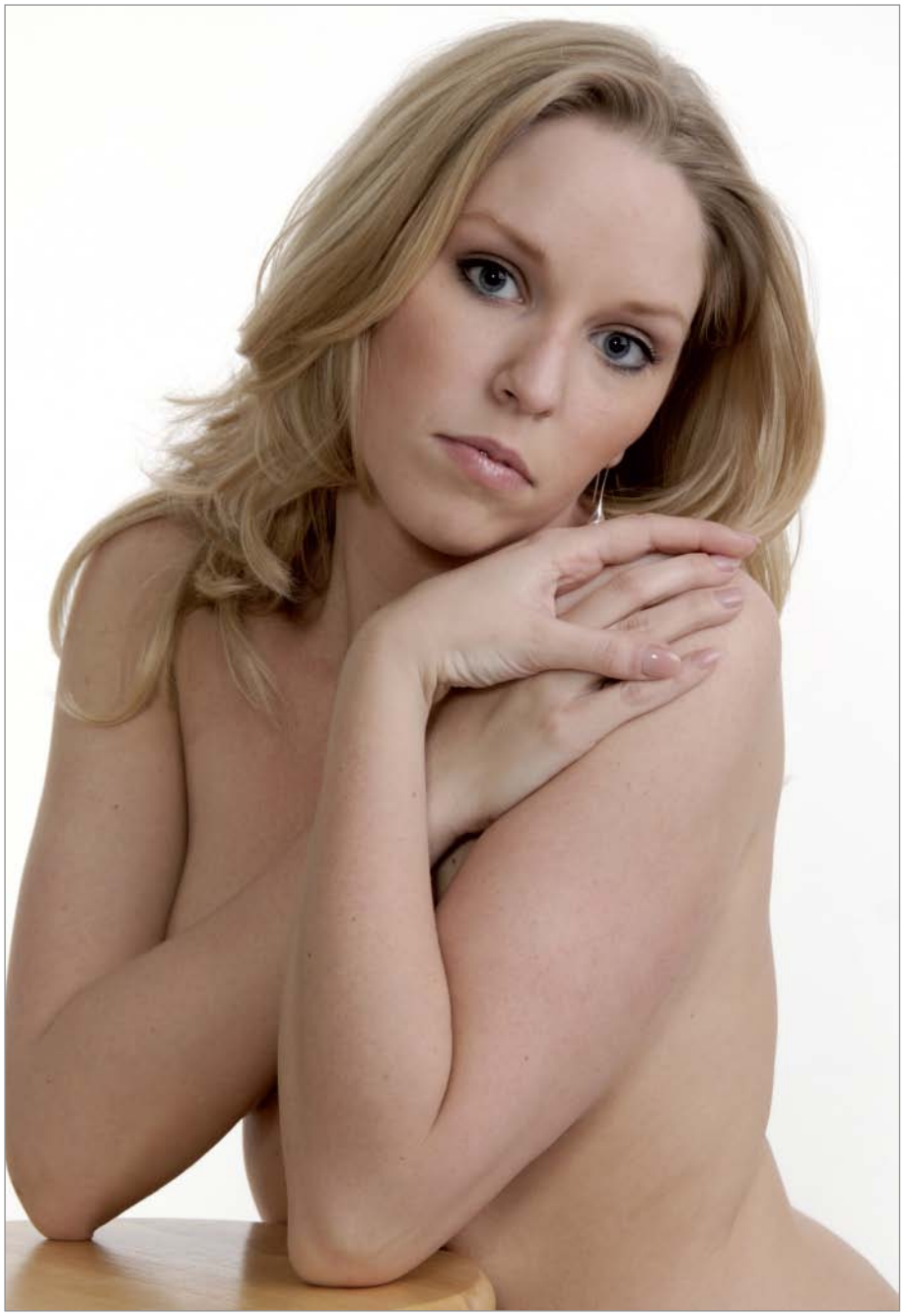
Images for Model Portfolios. Since aspiring models often see these types of images, they are usually very willing to do these types of shots for their portfolios. This would be a lucrative market for them, though it is very competitive from their perspective, as well. If you plan to do a commercial-style shoot, clip out the ads you want to imitate and ask the model to bring some of her favorites, too. It would also be very helpful to have a makeup artist to prepare the model for the shoot. Just try to keep the model's expectations (and your own) realistic when approaching this field.

■ It can be a useful learning experience to try to imitate some of these shots.

Nude Portraits

Defining Qualities. Nude portraits, like any other type of portraits, try to capture people in a flattering way. People sometimes contact me and ask me to take nude photographs of them for their own use, or perhaps for a gift. These are everyday people—nurses, police officers, computer engineers, managers, salesmen, and others. They usually want to remember how they looked at a particular point in time. Decade birthdays seem to be a popular time to have these images done, as are life-changing events. When I shoot these types of photographs, I try to show something about the person, to include their personality in the photograph. It's the same as when I shoot any other any type of portrait, except that there are no clothes involved.

Breaking the Ice. The challenge, of course, is to get a naked stranger to relax in front of your camera so that you can capture something about their personality in a photograph. It's actually easier than you may think. If someone is brave enough to contact you to take nude photographs of themselves, they are generally not very shy. Most everyone, even experienced models, will tend to be a little nervous at first when shooting nudes, so the hardest part is just getting started. Take your time and get to know each other. Show them some of



LEFT AND FACING PAGE—Nude portraits, like any other type of portrait, try to capture people in a flattering way.

your photographs and discuss the images they'd like to have you shoot. Show them around the shooting location and try to put them at ease. It is not unusual to set up a meeting before the day of the shoot, just to get to know each other and to discuss the photographs the person would like.

Although it's nice to break the ice and get to know each other a little before you start, the subject will probably still be nervous for the first few minutes, so just expect it and don't worry if the first few photographs are not very good. That's only normal. One thing that may seem counterintuitive but is actually very effective is to just have them take their clothes off right away at the start

■ It is not unusual to set up a meeting before the day of the shoot.

■ After a few minutes, they don't even notice that they have no clothes on.

of the shoot. That way getting naked is not hanging over their head. Most people relax pretty quickly; after a few minutes, they don't even notice that they have no clothes on. Most people tell me that they really enjoy the experience of modeling nude and often tell their friends about the shoot. That's actually been a great source of referrals for additional work.

Directing the Shoot. When working with a "real person" as opposed to a model, you will probably need to do a lot of directing. Be ready with ideas for settings and poses. Having some examples ready to show them is extremely

helpful. It can be very difficult to describe a pose, but it's easy to show them an image to imitate. You can use either images you have taken or photographs from books and magazines. Hopefully, you'll know something about your subject before the shoot so that you can suggest images that highlight their best features and camouflage any problem areas. Since these images are for their own personal use, be sure to remain open to anything they'd like to shoot. If they have any prominent moles or scars, you may want to have a discussion about whether they want them to appear in the images or not. After all, they are your customer and the customer is always right.

■ Remember: the more great images you create, the more prints you will sell.

Remember: the more great images you create, the more prints you will sell. Your goal should be to give them so many images they love, that they'll want to order lots of prints and maybe even shoot with you again. I usually try to give them a CD of images within a week after the shoot. Be sure to work out all of the details of what you will provide and when, plus the costs—and don't forget to give them extra business cards to give to their friends.

Pornographic Nudes

Defining Qualities. Pornographic images are intended to arouse. They are usually sexually explicit and push the limits of what many people find "acceptable." A photograph of a model engaging in sexual activity would probably be considered pornographic by most people. An image of a woman with her legs spread open could have different interpretations, depending on the exact pose, the setting, the lighting, and even the context in which it is presented. Photographers like Robert Mapplethorpe and Roy Stuart have challenged these assumptions and have pushed some very sexual images into the realm of art. I guess I would agree with the person who said, "I don't know how to define pornography, but I know it when I see it."

Communicating with the Model. Of all the types of nude images, this is the one where you need to be the most up-front with the model. There are models out there who are willing to shoot most any type of images you'd like—just be very clear about what you expect at the shoot. Models do not like to be surprised or pushed beyond their comfort limit.

Publishing Your Work. There are many publications that use pornographic images, so there is clearly a market for this type of work. With the advent of digital photography, there is really no longer an issue about where to get photographs developed or a concern about copies falling into the wrong hands. This was an issue back in the days when film was the prevalent medium.

If your intension is to shoot for a specific adult magazine, be sure you have a very good idea of the types of images they publish. You should also contact the photo editor to ask for submission guidelines. These are sometimes available online. (Actually this same advice holds for any type of publication. Be sure

you know the publication and its guidelines for submissions.) Be sure to present yourself in professional manner to the publisher, even if you are just a beginner. Shooting pornographic-style art may severely limit your options for exhibition and publication.

Fetish Images

Defining Qualities. Fetish images generally appeal to a specialized taste. Although fetish images are sometimes considered pornographic, that's not necessarily the case. In fact, not all fetish images are even nudes. Since these tend to be specialized images, with limited appeal, some people will love them and some will hate them. Others will just scratch their heads and move on, saying that they don't get it. Actually, the same can be said for many artistic endeavors. Some people will get it and some won't. Fetish images just seem to intensify these feelings.

Shoe fetish images are one of the most commonly photographed fetishes.

There are so many fetishes that it would be impossible to list them all. Some of the most popular for photographers seem to be foot fetishes (including shoes and stockings); leather, vinyl and other skin-tight coverings; corsets and many different types of bondage; messy food; time periods such as the '40s and '50s—and the list goes on and on. Sometimes the images are simulated and sometimes they are real.

Model Selection. Obviously, your choice of models will be limited to those models willing to participate in the particular fetish. While most models would probably be willing to model in shoes, many may hesitate to be tied up. Be clear about your expectations and respect your model's boundaries. Whatever you shoot, try to create great images and strive to capture the mood of the fetish.

Fetish-Like Images. While your desire to shoot fetish images will, of course, depend on your taste and preferences, you can also shoot fetish-like images. For example, I have used a chain as a prop for some of my images. This seems to carry certain unintended connotations for some people. Since you can't control how someone will interpret your work, you may find yourself shooting fetish images without even realizing it. Many of my early images were all barefoot, simply because the models didn't bring any shoes to wear for the photographs. I didn't really think about it, until someone asked me if I had a foot fetish. Now I ask my models to bring shoes with them to shoot

This "fetish-like" image uses chains as a prop.

in and people ask me if I have a shoe fetish. I have neither fetish and shoot both models with shoes on and barefoot, whichever seems most appropriate for the image I am trying to create. If you decide to shoot fetish images, you may find yourself with a limited but loyal audience for your work.

Implied and Partial Nudes

Defining Qualities. Implied nudes/partial nudes are subcategories that seem to create some confusion. The reason I refer to them as subcategories is because many different types of images can be shot as implied or partial nudes. My definition of an implied nude is the model is nude, but her nipples and pubic area are covered—usually by her pose, a prop, or the skillful use of lighting. I would also consider nudes shot from behind to be implied nudes. In partial nudes, the model is generally topless and uses a garment or piece of fabric to cover her lower half. Artistic, glamour, commercial, portraits, and fetish images can all be done as implied or partial nudes. Another subcategory to consider is the simulated nude. That is when a model is wearing an article of clothing, but poses in such a way that she appears to be nude. Since there seems to be so

■ Many different types of images can be shot as implied or partial nudes.

much controversy surrounding these definitions, clear communication with the model and well-defined expectations are important.

Models who think they may want to try nude modeling but aren't sure may want to start with implied nudes. That will give them a chance to explore their comfort level with nudity and a chance test their boundaries. When they are ready, they can try more revealing poses. This is a good way to work during a nude portrait session. Once the model is comfortable with the surroundings and her photographer, she will usually move on to shooting full nudes.

■ This is a good way to work during a nude portrait session.

Unconventional Images and Experimental Techniques

It's easy to get stuck in a rut and to keep producing the same types of images. One way to avoid that is to experiment. Try out new photographic techniques,

In this type of implied nude, the model is nude, but covers herself with her pose.

Experimental images can be produced by the creative use of lighting and movement.

use a lighting setup you've never used before, have fun with styling, or ask your model to experiment with unconventional poses. The goal is to create some unique, original images. Don't be afraid to fail; you can always learn something from the attempt. Experimenting is especially fun with a model you have worked with many times. After shooting with a model several times, the images can start to feel stale. The next time you work together, try something you've never done before. Since you already have many great images of her, there is nothing to lose and potentially something wonderful to gain.

There are many creative photographic techniques that can be used when photographing nudes. Some of my favorites are painting with light; multiple flash; multiple exposure; handheld with a slow shutter speed; zoom-in/zoom-out; unique perspectives; and selective focus. A description of each of these techniques is provided later in this book. One of the major advantages of digital photography is the ability to preview your images. This is especially helpful when you are trying something for the first time. Let the model see the previews, too—especially if it is something new to her. It will help her get a feel for what you are trying to accomplish and hopefully she will be able contribute her ideas to improve the next shot.

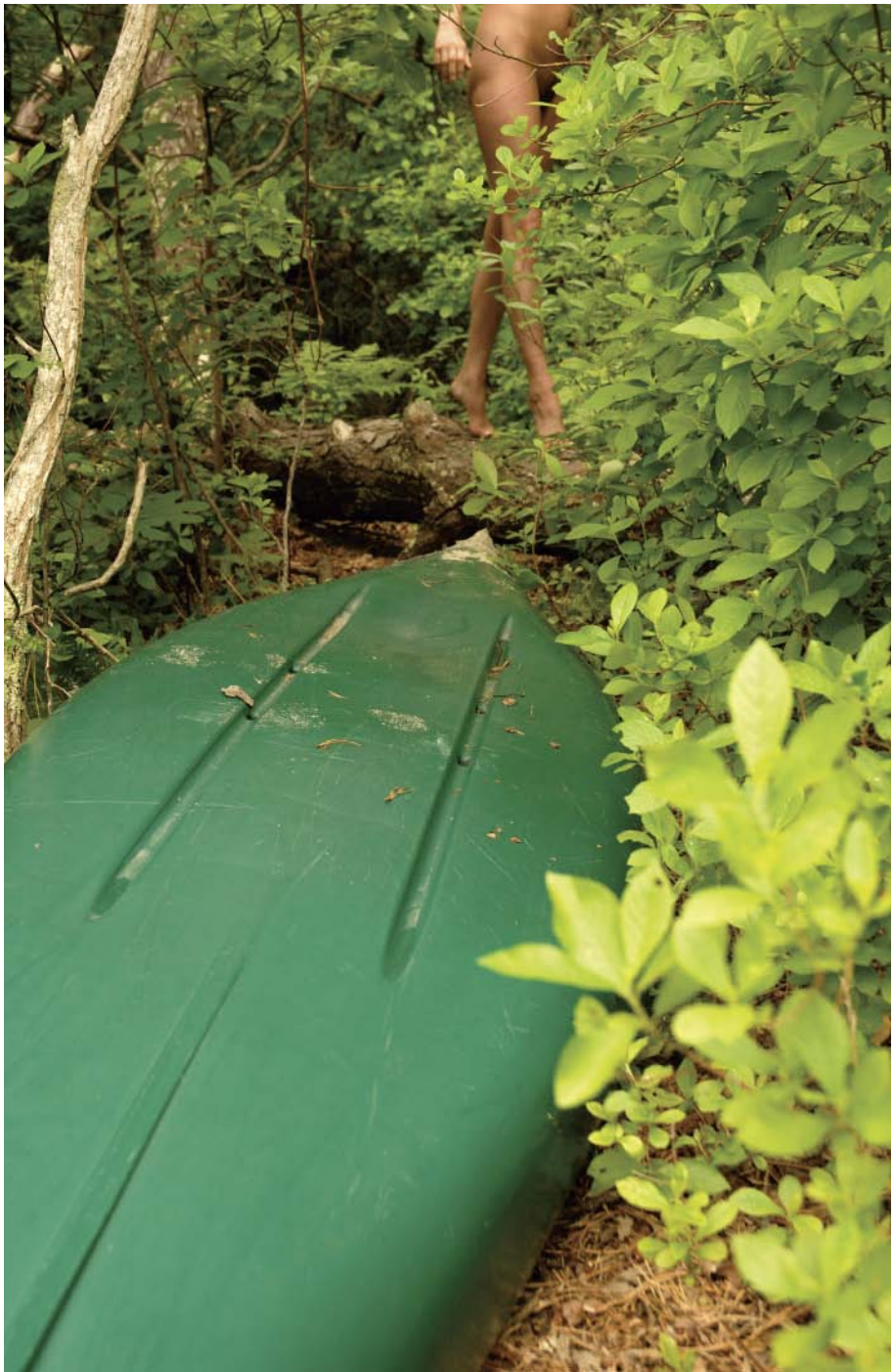
■ There are many creative photographic techniques that can be used when photographing nudes.

Final Thoughts

Hopefully this chapter has given you some insight into the vast possibilities for shooting nudes, but the best way to find your niche is to explore. If you don't really know what you'd like to shoot, try shooting several different styles. Just don't get too hung up on categorizing your images. You may think that you are creating art, but someone else may consider your work to be glamour and a third person may think it's pornographic. Whatever style you photograph, do it because it's what you want to shoot. If you are true to yourself, you will produce images that you love, and that's what is most important. Others will think whatever they want of your work. That's totally out of your control.

■ Whatever style you photograph, do it because it's what you want to shoot.

Finding the right models will be a key to creating the photographs you want. But where do you find nude models that would be willing to work with you? That's what the next chapter is all about.



Use creative cropping and composition to produce unconventional images.

2. Models

When I show people my work, one of the most common questions I get asked is, "Where do you find your models?" That's a fair question. After all, most people are not willing to take off their clothes and pose for someone with a camera, especially if that person is a total stranger. But, there *are* people out there who are willing to model nude for you. You just need to know where to find them.

Where Do You Find Your Models?

Potential models are all around and my models come from many different sources. Some are strangers, some are people that I know. Some are referred to me by other models or photographers, others seek me out. There are models that I contact because I love their images, there are models who contact me because they love my work and want to do something creative. A few of my models have even been people that I was just having a casual conversation with and we discovered a common interest in creating art.

■ Potential models are all around and my models come from many different sources.

Finding the Right Models

Regardless of the source, the most important thing is to find the right model for the images you want to create. The right model is someone who has a connection to your work and who wants to collaborate with you to produce the images you have in mind. She also needs to have the right look and style for your type of photography. In other words, she needs to be someone you would want to photograph.

Practical Considerations. There are practical considerations to consider as well. Are you located within a reasonable distance of each other? Do your schedules mesh? Can you agree on compensation and usage rights? There are several models with whom I would love to work, but they are located thousands of miles away, so it hasn't happened—at least not yet. I did contact a couple of them and asked them to let me know if they ever travel to my area of the country so that we could potentially do a shoot.

When you find a great model, work with her as often as you can and try out different looks.

Initial Communications. Before you contact a potential model, try to determine what drew you to her. Also think about the kinds of images you'd like to shoot with her. It's very helpful to at least have a general concept in mind before talking to her so that you can tell her about your ideas and answer any questions she may have. After sharing your ideas, try to read her response. Does she understand your concept for the shoot? Does she share your enthusiasm for the photographs you plan to create? If not, you may have a disappointing session.

During your initial communications, if a model seems unsure about working with you, you could offer to meet her in a public place, like a coffee shop. Tell her to feel free to bring a friend along if she'd like. That will give her a chance to get to know you and to decide if she would be comfortable modeling for you. It will also give you a good chance to get to know her. Show her some of your work and discuss some ideas you have for images of her.

Evaluating Potential Models. If someone contacts you and wants to model for you, you will need to decide if you really want to work with them or not. Although it is always flattering when someone admires your work and wants to shoot with you, it may not always be a good fit. Try to ask some questions to get a feel for her personality. Also, ask to see a few images of her, preferably nude. That could save an unpleasant surprise at the shoot.

If that's not possible, you'll just have to use your best judgment and decide whether to take a chance on her. There have been a couple of cases where I would not have chosen to work with a particular model if had I known what she looked like with no clothes on, but I made the best of the situation. For the most part, if someone contacts you and wants to model nude for you, they usually wind up being a good model or at least someone you can work with to get a few good images.

■ Try to ask some questions to get a feel for her personality.

Make the Most of a Great Model. If you are fortunate enough to find a great model, try to work with her as often as you can—you never know when she'll decide to stop modeling or leave the area. I worked with a wonderful model every Sunday for several months and then she moved away. I have not worked with her since. When you photograph a model on a regular basis, don't be afraid to experiment. Inspire each other to create great photographs; let her become your muse.

If you want a fresh perspective or a different look for your images, seek out new models, but don't forget your old friends who helped you to create your favorite images. There is always more that you can do together. It's always wonderful when you get an e-mail containing the phrase, "Remember me? We did a great shoot a couple of years ago and I'd love to work with you again!" Don't be afraid to send out some of those e-mails yourself to models you've worked with in the past. If nothing else, it's a good way to catch up.

Workshops and Group Photo Shoots

■ After doing some extensive research online, I found a good option.

So, where can you find nude models—especially when you don't have any nude images in your portfolio to show to potential models? That's something that I struggled with when I was first starting out. I wanted to try shooting nudes, but didn't know where to find a model. After doing some extensive research online, I found a good option. There was a nude photography workshop about a five-hour drive from me. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I signed up and made the trip. I was a little nervous to start, but after about half an hour of shooting, I knew that I had made a good decision.

Advantages of Workshops. Workshops are a great option when you are just starting out—they let someone else find the models for you. Attending workshops is also a great way to start building your portfolio so that you have some work to show to prospective models. You also tend to shoot in groups, so if you are not comfortable directing a model, you can let someone else take the lead and shoot over their shoulder. There are usually some experienced photographers in attendance and they can be a great resource. Watch what they do and try to learn from them. Eventually, you may work up the courage to take a turn at directing. Workshops also tend be social events, so try to pick other people's brains over dinner that evening.

You can meet some great models at photography workshops.

You can meet some great models at photography workshops.

Workshops *vs.* Group Photo Shoots. Finding the right workshop can be tricky. There are many people who advertise workshops that are really nothing more than group photo shoots. If you want a workshop where you can learn and improve, you will need to do some research. Search for reviews online and ask other photographers if they have attended the workshop you are considering. They will often be your best source of information.

There are a couple of guidelines that you may find helpful in selecting an appropriate workshop. If the workshop information is mostly about the models that will be available, it is mostly likely a group photo shoot. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but you need to understand what you are getting yourself into. If all you really want to do is photograph models, this may be a good op-

There are a couple of guidelines that you may find helpful in selecting an appropriate workshop.

tion for you. Though, be warned: these shoots can become chaotic and disorganized, especially if the photographer-to-model ratio is not kept to a reasonable level. Group photo shoots can be a good place to meet some new models and to make some good contacts. If you meet a model that you'd like to work with again, try to set up a shoot with her under more controlled circumstances.

If, on the other hand, you would like to attend a workshop with some good teaching, look for ones that prominently feature the photographer's work. This type of workshop will usually provide information about the instructor, including their biography and accomplishments. They are often published photographers who exhibit in several galleries. Good teaching workshops will provide portfolio reviews, photo shoots, plus feedback on the images you create during the workshop. These are often intense multi-day events and can cost a substantial amount of money. I have found these to be the most fulfilling and fun workshops, so I try to attend one at least once a year. Not only are they good learning opportunities, but they can also leave you feeling enthusiastic and inspired!

■ I have found these to be the most fulfilling and fun workshops.

Online Models

Looking for models online can be an adventure. If you search for modeling web sites, you will discover that there are many to choose from. Browse through the site to get a good idea of the quantity and quality of models available on that particular site. Also, try to get a feel for the search capabilities of the site and other available features. Sometimes you need to become a member of the site to really see anything, but many sites are free or offer a free level of membership with some limited capabilities. Most sites have forums, which can be helpful, but as with most forums there is a lot of junk to filter through. Some sites give you the ability to give and receive feedback. Most often, it is just gratuitous flattery and not very helpful. What can be helpful is seeing the number of views an image receives. That will give some idea of the images that people are drawn to. Just be careful; that, too, can be misleading. Sometimes people are drawn to a particular image because of a beautiful model and not because it's a great photograph.

Now for the big warning: there is a *huge* flake factor with online models. It seems that many "models" put up profiles but aren't really serious about modeling. After talking to other photographers, I have found that my experience with online models is pretty typical. About one in ten models will even respond to an e-mail when you contact them. Once you set up a shoot, confirm the details, and touch base the day before, there is still only about a 50-50 chance the model will actually show up. Some come up with last minute excuses; some just stand you up. Comparing "war stories," the most common excuses are that they got into an accident on the way to the shoot, or they have a dead or dying

relative. One model lost her grandmother half a dozen times in one year. Most likely, they just got cold feet or were never serious about modeling. The good news is that photographers do talk to each other, and a model that flakes-out too often will usually find that she is no longer booking any shoots.

You can also search for model ads in places such as craigslist (www.craigslist.com). I have not had much luck using this route, but other photographers have told me that these options have worked well for them. As with modeling sites, it will probably require some persistence to find good models. Again, beware of flakes and scams. Of course, there is a risk with answering any ad. If you have any doubts, it's a good idea to meet ahead of time in a public location to determine if the model is legitimate. It can also help to assure her that you are a legitimate photographer.

So why bother with online models? Because among the flakes are some real gems. I have found some truly amazing models online. Some of the best images I have ever created have been with models that I e-mailed through a modeling web site. I have just accepted the fact that, after I go through all of the trouble of preparing for a shoot, I may very well wind up with nothing to show for it. However, I may meet someone truly amazing and that will make all of the missed shoots irrelevant.

Experienced Models

Another option to minimize model no-shows is to book only "experienced" models. The reason I put experienced in quotes is because some models claim to be experienced, even though they have nothing but poor-quality cell-phone pictures in their portfolio. You'll have to use your own judgment to determine their true experience level—though it's usually not too hard to spot a phony.

■ Another option to minimize model no-shows is to book only "experienced" models.

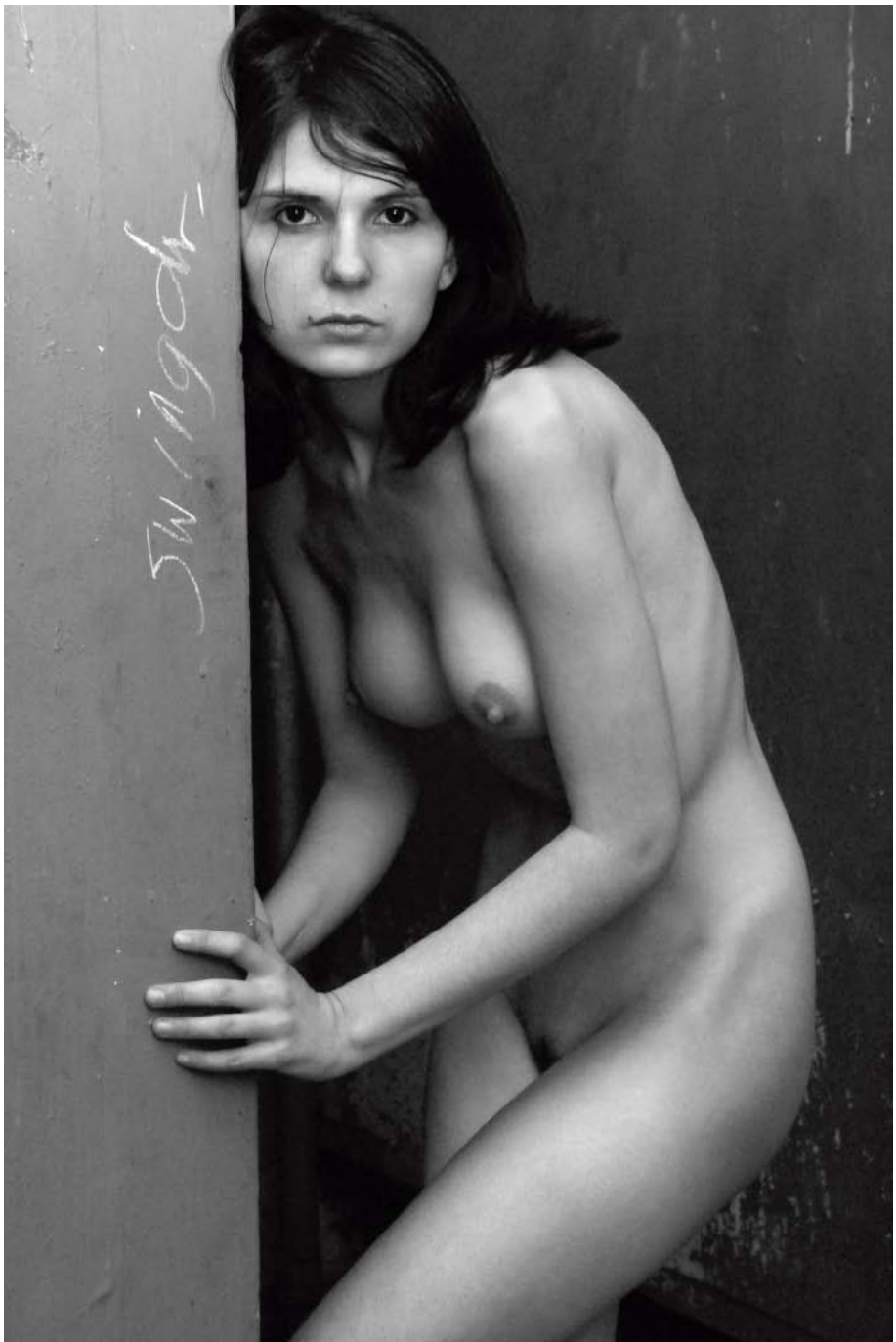
Payment. One issue I've had with experienced models is that they often expect to be paid a lot of money. Since I don't have a large budget for photo shoots, that doesn't make sense for me, so I usually pass on working with them. Many of my shoots are TFP (Time for Print; the model works in exchange for prints and/or JPGs for her portfolio) or for a small amount of money—basically gas money. It doesn't make sense to pay a model a lot of money unless you expect to make some of it back, especially when there are many good models who are willing to work for less.

The Advantages and Drawbacks of Experience. There are several reasons to consider working with experienced models. Most are concerned about protecting their reputation, so they are usually very dependable. If you are unsure about posing and directing, they can often help you work through that. You may not get original images, but at least you won't be stuck for what to do next. Also, not all experienced models are looking for high-paying shoots. Many are willing to work for a reasonable fee and some images from the shoot.

One potential issue is that models who have a lot of experience can also be very set in their ways, as far as poses go. You could easily wind up with the same images that everyone else taken has of them, because they give you their stock poses. If that is not what you are looking for, it's up to you to direct the model to get the images you want. Most models are open to that approach and, in fact, some very experienced models have really appreciated the chance to shoot something different.

Photographer Recommendations and References

One of the best ways to find good models is to network and talk to other photographers and artists who work with models. For the most part, photographers are more than willing to recommend models they have worked with. An out-of-town photographer, who was kind enough to let me use his studio, told me that there was a model he had worked with who was wonderful; he thought



Talk to other photographers about their models. Usually, they will only recommend someone they have worked with and found to be a really good model.

that I would really enjoy working with her. He showed me some beautiful images he had shot of her and told me that besides being a good model she was a fun person. So I dropped her an e-mail and a couple of weeks later we did a shoot together. He was right; she was awesome! It was one of the best shoots I have ever done. She was everything he told me and more. To repay the favor, I told him about one of my favorite models.

Photographer recommendations are usually very solid. Most photographers would be hesitant to give a glowing recommendation about a model unless she is really good. After all, the photographer's reputation is on the line, too. I've had photographers ask me about models I've worked with, and I have always been honest with them. When I find a great model, I am always happy to spread the word—but I am also willing to tell the truth about models who are not so good. You can also consider using artists' models. They are usually very patient and easy to work with. Try posting a bulletin-board note at a local art school or ask your artist friends about their models.

■ Photographer recommendations are usually very solid.

If you are unsure about any model, ask her for references, and then contact the other photographers she has worked with. As with all things, if you don't know the other photographer, you will have to take any comments he gives you with a grain of salt. My main goal is to try to determine if she is reliable and easy to work with. I'm really not interested in the photographs taken of her by others (other than to see what she looks like). If and when we work together, I will shoot in my style, so how others have photographed her isn't really all that relevant to me and my work. Be leery of heavily altered images; the model who shows up may not look anything like the one in the images.

Regular People

Once you have a body of work containing some strong images, you can think about asking regular people to model for you.

Photographing People You Know. How you approach someone you know about modeling nude for you will very much depend on your relationship with that person. If it's your wife or girlfriend, then it will probably be easy. A casual acquaintance could be a more difficult conversation. Perhaps you could start out by talking about your interest in photography and offer to show them your images. If they say something like, "These are nice, but I could never do that," then you know not to ask. On the other hand, if they say, "These photos are awesome—I'd love to do something like that!" then you know you've found your next model. Often, a friend is willing to model in exchange for prints. Try to be generous in what you offer. After all, she is your friend. These shoots are usually fun and relaxed and will often yield good results.

Finding New Models. Finding a new model, someone who has never modeled before, is always great. It's certainly one way to produce images that no one

else has ever done before. Try talking to people that you meet at art galleries, coffee shops, and other places where creative people usually hang out. Bring up your passion for photography and see if they seem interested. If they are, ask if they'd like to see some of your work. Always be sure to have some business cards with you. They don't need to be anything fancy, just a way to leave contact information with them. I print my cards on my photo printer, using business-card stock. Other options for finding new models include placing an ad of your own or organizing a casting call.

Some of my best shoots have been with these "civilian" models. They are usually very enthusiastic and are excited to be photographed. Since they have an interest in creating art, they can often contribute their own ideas for images and come up with unique poses. Art-class models are also great to work with for the same reason. Although new models can sometimes be a little nervous to start, they usually warm up to modeling pretty quickly and enjoy the experience.

Getting Referrals. A great source for finding new models is talking to models you already know. Ask your current models if they know anyone else who might be interested in working with you. Just be careful not to give the im-

Talking to creative people at galleries and coffee shops can sometimes yield a good model.

pression that you are looking to replace them. Tell them you are you looking to expand your circle of models and plan to continue working with them, as well. Most models are usually happy to recommend friends and other models they know. This is also a good opportunity to potentially arrange a two-model shoot.

Creating a Web Site. Once you have a body of work, you can create a web site to showcase your photography. Then, do everything you can to help people find it. Submit your site to search engines and link to other photography web sites. Having a web site gives you a degree of legitimacy and is a good way to show potential models a sample of your work. The site doesn't have to be anything elaborate. Just some simple thumbnails with links to your best images are sufficient. Many people have found me via my web site and have told me that's what convinced them to work with me. If you hand out business cards, be sure to include your web site, as well as your phone number and e-mail address. Some models are leery of photographers without an online presence, so even a free site linked to your e-mail is better than nothing at all. However, a custom-built site gives a better impression and is usually relatively inexpensive. My web site is www.pbilous photo.com, and it costs about $25 a month.

Artist's models are usually very patient and easy to work with. Plus they can often suggest some "classic" poses they have used for art classes.

Final Thoughts

If are you willing to be persistent and patient, you'll be pleasantly surprised by the number of models you will be able to find. Although you may need to start with workshops and group photo shoots, as you build up your portfolio and enhance your reputation, finding models will become easier. Of course, the number of models you have to work with will also depend on where you live. If you live in a large city, you will probably have more options than a photographer in a remote location—but there are always options, especially if you are willing to travel.

Now that you have a model lined up, where can you photograph her?

3. Shooting Locations

A photo studio is, of course, a great shooting location—if you have access to one. But most any place can be used as a setting for nude photographs as long as you can get some privacy. Some of my favorite images have been created in unlikely locations.

The key is to keep an open mind and try to visualize the images that could be created in a given setting. That is especially important if you want to create unique images. Nudes have been shot in so many different places, so it takes real imagination to do something different.

Incorporate the Features of the Location into Your Images

Wherever you shoot, try to incorporate the features of the location into your images. After all, that's the main reason for shooting in a location. Think about what you like about the setting. What drew you there? Once you identify that, try to find ways to incorporate those features into your image. Working with the natural light can also help capture the mood of a place. Although you may need

Where ever you shoot, try to incorporate the features of the location into your images.

to enhance the existing light, try not to overwhelm it or you could lose the ambience of the location.

Make the Best of Your Location

Sometimes you have to use a location, not because you really like it, but because it is all you have available. That does not mean that you can't produce some great images; it just means you'll have to get creative. A few times, my only option was to shoot in a hotel room; it wasn't ideal, but it was my only choice. I had to work with what was available in the room and look for unique features. There are always possibilities if you seek them out.

Your Home or the Model's Home

A potential shooting location can be your home or the model's home. If a model is a little apprehensive about posing nude, she may feel more comfortable in familiar surroundings. There is a risk, of course: unless you've seen your model's home, you have no idea what you are walking into. Sometimes it's a great place to shoot, and other times there isn't much to work with. I've had a few interesting experiences when shooting at a model's home, such as tripping over clutter and dealing with roommates coming home unexpectedly. All you can do is go into the shoot with a sense of adventure and deal with each situation as it arises.

FACING PAGE (TOP LEFT AND RIGHT)—*Try to incorporate the features of the location into your images.*

FACING PAGE (BOTTOM)—*Shooting in a hotel room is not ideal, but there are always possibilities if you get creative.*

BELOW—*The model's home can be a good shooting location.*

Shooting in your own home is a completely different prospect. Even though you know exactly what's available, you need to look at potential settings through the eyes of a photographer. There are probably good places to shoot—places that you look at everyday but may not have considered as photographic locations. If you frequently shoot in your home, as I do, the challenge becomes avoiding making the same image with different models. Of course, a model may

When shooting in the same location with different models, try different variations.

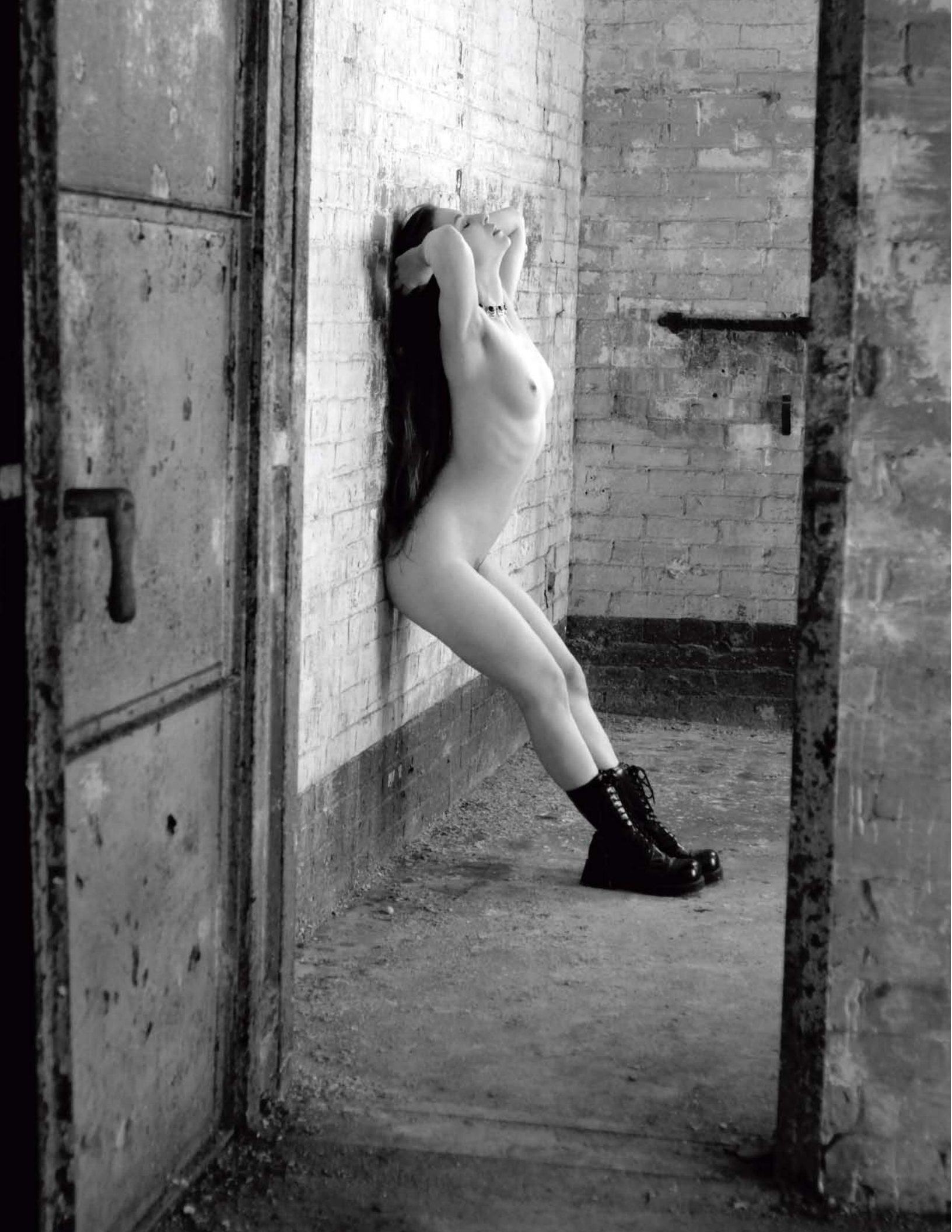
TOP (LEFT AND RIGHT)—*When shooting in a typical home, there are many potential locations, such as a sofa or a big wicker chair.*

ABOVE (LEFT AND RIGHT)—*Bedrooms and bathrooms can also provide good shooting locations.*

LEFT—*Even kitchens can offer interesting photographic opportunities.*

really like an image you've created in a certain location and want a similar one for herself. In that case, give her what she wants—but keep an eye open for variations. Even though you've shot there before, hopefully a different model will bring something new to the photographs.

Ask around to see if you have a friend who has an interesting home or property that they may be willing to let you use for a shoot. For example, a farm can offer many great shooting locations. An old house with unique features is also a wonderful place to shoot. Even if it's just a typical home, it's still a new location that you haven't used, so keep an eye open the next time you visit a friend.

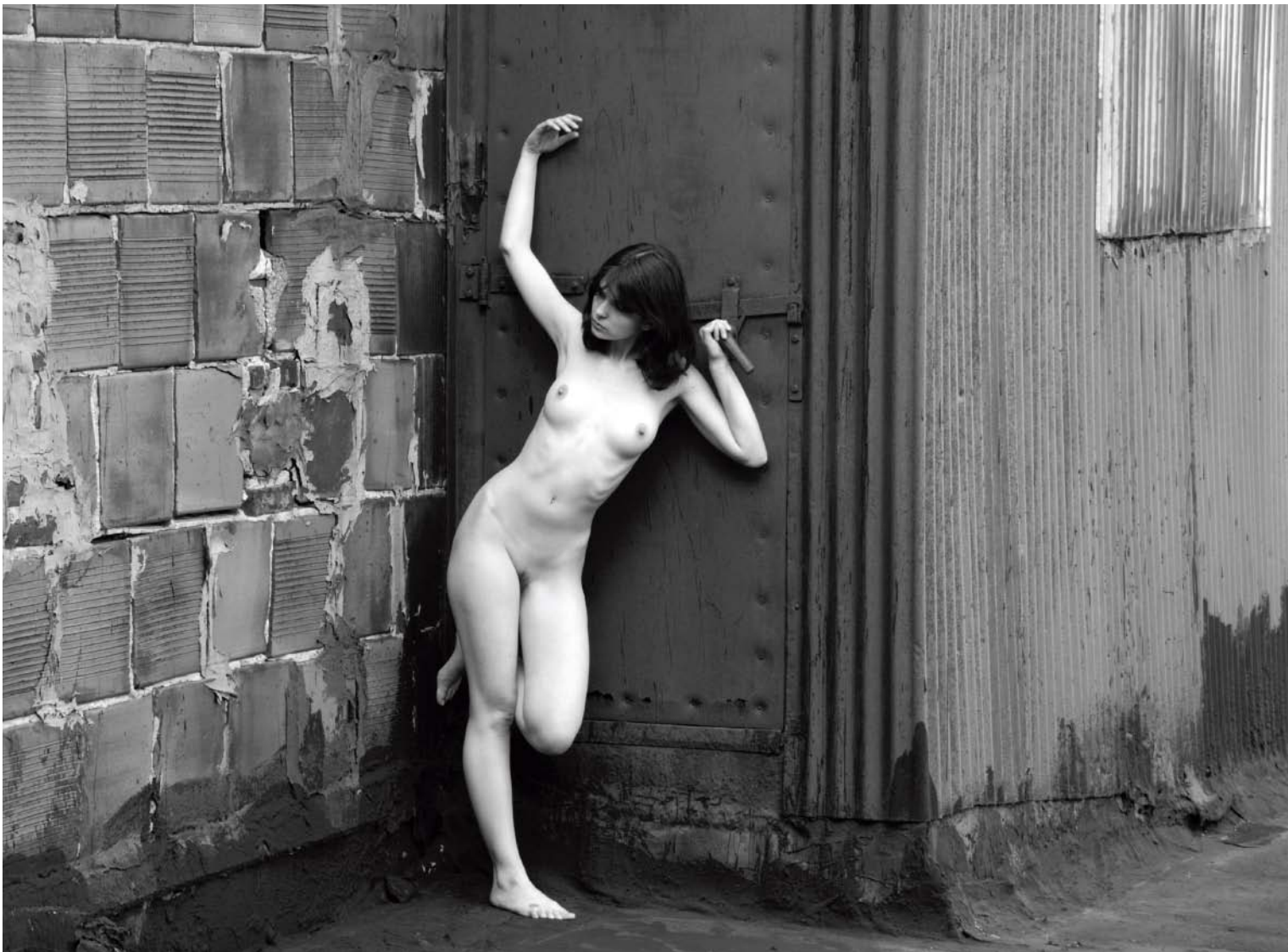


Old, Abandoned Buildings

Old, abandoned buildings make a great setting for nudes, though you should be sure that it is truly abandoned; otherwise you may be trespassing. It would also be best if the building is in an out-of-the-way location, to reduce the likelihood of unexpected visitors. If possible, it is always a good idea to have an assistant to act as a lookout, whenever shooting in a location where someone could happen by. They can also help to carry equipment and hold a reflector or a light if necessary. If you don't have an assistant, at least try to have a cover-up near by, just in case.

Rundown structures often work best when shot in black & white. The stark feeling of monochrome images can help to enhance the desolate mood of the surroundings. It's easy to get engrossed in your surroundings during a shoot, but you need to be extra careful when shooting in an old building. There can be splintered boards, nails, broken glass, rusty metal, rotten structures, and collapsing floors or ceilings. No image is worth an injury, so be aware of your surroundings. Also, never ask your model to pose barefoot unless you are absolutely sure of the footing where she'll be standing. Besides, shoes can add interest to the images, as well as protect her feet.

Rundown structures often work best when shot in black & white.



Natural Settings

Natural settings, such as woods, mountains, lakes, seashores, and rivers, are wonderful places to shoot nudes. A nude body just fits in as a part of nature. The problem is ensuring an appropriate degree of privacy. You will definitely need to get off of the beaten path to find a good place to photograph nudes. Again, an assistant/lookout is very helpful. The ideal situation is to find private property where you can shoot—with the owner's permission, of course. It's a good idea to scout the area ahead of time to have a good idea of where you'd like to shoot. Be sure to tell your model that you'll be walking in the woods or along the shore (or wherever you'll be shooting) so she knows what to expect. Also, ask her to wear something that's easy to slip on and off, in case someone does happen along. A simple dress seems to work best for that.

Natural settings are wonderful places to shoot nudes.

The Studio

Since you have total control of the light and the surroundings, a studio is a great place to shoot nudes. You will also have all of the privacy you need. Often, conveniences such as a bathroom and a dressing room with a mirror will also be available for your use. In many cases, you can set up a temporary studio in your home. All you really need is enough open space.

If you only need access to a studio from time to time, you may want to consider renting a studio from another photographer. While you're there, take a good look around to see how they have things set up. You could pick up some good tips for setting up your own studio.

If you have windows in your studio, you can work with natural light.

If you have the room, you can set up a studio in your home.

If you plan to do a lot of studio work, you may want to look into renting some space. Many cities have rental spaces available at very reasonable prices, especially in old buildings. You could also consider sharing a space with other photographers and splitting the costs.

When working in the studio, start out with basic lighting and work your way up to more complex setups. Some very beautiful images can be created using just one light. Actually, if you have windows in your studio space, you don't really need any additional lighting. You can shoot using natural light and use a reflector, if necessary, to fill in any unwanted shadows. (You will, however, be limited as to the time of day that you can shoot and still have enough light.) As you gain experience and learn from your shoots, trying adding additional lights, but do it for a reason. Think about the effect you are trying to achieve.

■ Start out with basic lighting and work your way up to more complex setups.

When working in the studio, take your time and really look at the effect the light has on your model. After all, one of the main reasons for shooting in a studio is to set up the lighting exactly the way you want to create the images you are after. When first starting out with studio photography, don't get discouraged if you don't get the results you expect. It definitely takes some studying, plus trial and error to find the correct set-up. Research lighting setups and try some of them out for yourself. Learn from your mistakes and strive to make the next images better.

Workshops and Group Photo Shoots

Not only are workshops and group photo shoots a great place for finding models, they are also nice because someone else has already found some shooting locations for you. The downside is that all of the other photographers are shooting the same models in the same setting as you are. Of course, the setting

is new to you, so your images will be unique for you—but if you don't want images that look like everyone else's, you'll have to find some creative ways to shoot. Try lying on the floor or standing on a chair. Move away from the pack of photographers and find your own perspective. Depending on the situation, you may even get some one-on-one time with the model. Even if some of your images are similar to the others' shots, you can still create some photographs that you love and that will make nice additions to your portfolio.

Workshops and group photo shoots can provide you with unique shooting locations.

4. Equipment

There is one question that I always dread. It's usually asked innocently enough, so I try to answer it patiently, but it still rubs me the wrong way. The situation usually arises like this: while flipping through my portfolio someone will say, "These pictures are beautiful. What kind of camera do you use?" Arghhhh! After taking a deep breath, I tell them that I own several cameras and that it's not the camera that creates a great image, it's the skill of the photographer. A good photographer can produce great images with most any kind of equipment. The exact brand and model of the camera used doesn't matter nearly as much as what you do with it. The camera is only a tool. That would be like asking a great cook what brand of pots and pans they use. It doesn't matter. It's not the tools you use; it's the skill employed while using them.

Certainly good tools are helpful, but they are only a starting point. A great camera in the hands of a skilled photographer can be used to produce superior images. However, an inexperienced amateur using the same equipment will not necessarily create any good photographs. Great photographers can produce great photographs with just about any camera. On the other hand, someone who doesn't understand lighting, composition; or how to use the features of their camera will not magically create better images just by obtaining better equipment. (Although, after seeing some of the camera advertisements, I can certainly understand how that perception gets perpetuated.) Granted, using the automatic modes available on the newer digital cameras can certainly help you take technically good pictures (*i.e.,* properly exposed, in focus, with good color balance). However, a great photograph is much more than that; it requires more than just good equipment to create a great photograph.

■ Certainly good tools are helpful, but they are only a starting point.

The point is, don't get too hung up on technology. I have seen photographers use everything from the most sophisticated high-end digital cameras to cheap plastic film cameras—and everything in between—to create beautiful images. You don't need to go out and spend thousands of dollars to create great photographs. Start with whatever equipment you already have and strive to fully understand and utilize its potential. What will make you a better photographer

is working hard to improve your shooting skills and improving your knowledge of photography. Edward Weston, who is considered a master of photography, worked with very basic equipment and a meager budget, but he mastered his equipment and his craft and produced some amazing images.

If, at some point in your photographic journey, you start feeling that your equipment is limiting your work, then it's time to go shopping. However, before you pull out your money, take the time to really understand your needs. Think about what you would like to do photographically that your current equipment doesn't allow. Once you answer that question, you will need to start doing your research. There are so many options that it can be pretty overwhelming, so you need to narrow down your choices. Determining what you can afford to spend is a good place to start. You should also read reviews and user experiences. The better informed you are, the better choices you will make.

■ Before you pull out your money, take the time to really understand your needs.

You can also ask other photographers about the equipment they use, but be leery of equipment geeks. Some photographers need to have the latest and greatest camera, just because it's available. When you ask them why, they'll quote specs at you but will not give you any real photographic reasons. Someone telling you that they bought a camera because it has a full-frame sensor or a 12-megapixel sensor is not a photographic reason. If, on the other hand, they say they need to make exhibition-quality, 20x24-inch prints and their current camera's image quality doesn't hold up to that degree of enlargement, they are giving you a valid reason.

What Kind of Camera is Right for You?

So what kind of camera is right for you? The first consideration would seem to be film or digital? Although digital is currently the dominant format, and it certainly has its advantages, film is *not* dead and is still a perfectly viable option. Although I love shooting with film, as well as digital, I would recommend digital for beginning photographers. Getting immediate feedback by previewing images is a great way to learn. If something isn't right, you can see it right away and fix it. If you were shooting film, you would have to wait until the film was developed to discover any problems.

Digital Cameras: Important Features

A simple digital camera is a great way to start out. Since the technology has grown by leaps and bounds, even relatively inexpensive digital cameras have some very nice features. Don't worry too much about "numbers." Manufacturers, and others, will try to convince you that you need a certain number of megapixels or a lens with a large zoom range. Although these are not bad features, they can add substantially to the cost of your camera without necessarily resulting in better images.

There are several features that would I consider important when buying a camera. If you really want to learn photography, you need a camera that will allow you to shoot in the manual mode. You need to be able to set the shutter speed and aperture manually. I also find an eyepiece viewfinder invaluable for careful composition of images. Interchangeable lenses and the ability to use an external flash are also features you would probably like to have. I also like to be able to mount my camera on a tripod and use a cable release. If you can't find all of the features you would like in your price range, consider buying a used camera. As new cameras come out, people who want to upgrade will often sell their old equipment at bargain prices. Just be sure that the equipment is in good shape and has not been abused.

When considering buying a camera, I think that it is important to hold the camera in your hands. Put it up to your eye and push the buttons. Look at the locations of the controls and turn the knobs. How does it feel in your hands? Are the functions intuitive and easy to use? Look through the menus and fire off a few images. Do the menus have a logical flow? Do the controls make sense to you? Sometimes, a camera that sounds good on paper, or was recommended to you, just doesn't feel right when you try to use it. That's why it's really important to take a "test drive" before making a purchase. If you can't touch the exact camera you are buying, at least try to find the same model in a store. If you have no choice but to buy something without trying it out, at least be sure that you can return it, in case it's not the right camera for you.

Film Cameras

Most photographers over a certain age probably had a 35mm film camera as their first serious camera. This is still an option. These cameras have all of the features you need to create great images—and at a fraction of the cost of an equivalent digital camera. Since digital has become the dominant format, many people are selling nice used 35mm cameras for real bargain prices. Just check ads, garage sales, and online auction sites.

Drawbacks of Film. The main drawback to using a film camera, in this age of digital imaging, is the availability and cost of film and processing. Although many stores have discontinued selling film, it is still available online. If you plan to use a film camera, I would strongly encourage you to have your own darkroom, or at least to have access to one, perhaps through a camera club. This will not only help to alleviate concerns about getting film processed but will also give you control over your finished prints. For the most part, film and darkroom photography is now done in black & white. Although there is still some color work being done in the darkroom, I've noticed that most of the color prints in art galleries are now digitally printed, regardless of the original media. I'll talk more about darkrooms later in this chapter. Also, remember that if you want to

■ Most of the color prints in art galleries are now digitally printed.

use your images online, you'll need to get a scanner so that you can scan in your images and convert them to JPGs.

Medium-Format Cameras. Although I primarily work with digital images, when I do shoot film it is generally with a medium-format film camera. Since a medium-format negative is many times larger than a 35mm frame, the quality of the prints is much higher. It seems that many photographers still use this format, because these cameras hold their value well. You can expect to pay several hundred dollars—and into the thousands—for a good-quality, used, medium-format camera. These cameras were intended for use by professionals and are very sturdily made. They tend to hold up well and can be used for many years. Just be leery of cameras from busy photo studios where they may have been used to take hundreds of thousands of photographs. They don't last forever.

Large-Format Cameras. Working with a large-format view camera will take you back to the roots of photography. There is something very special about putting a dark-cloth over your head, looking at the ground glass, and focusing on an upside-down and backwards image.

Since film holders are large and bulky, as is all large-format equipment, you will generally be very limited in the number of images you can shoot in a day. I have six film holders, so I can really only take twelve photographs a day. When you have that kind of limitation imposed on you, you tend to work at a much different pace than with other cameras. I have spent almost an hour getting everything set up, looking at the image from different angles, and discovered that I just couldn't find the image I wanted. So, I took down my equipment without even taking a shot. I didn't want to waste one of my precious exposures. Working at that kind of pace really forces you to think about what you want to shoot.

■ Working at that kind of pace really forces you to think about what you want to shoot.

Similarly, focusing with a loupe on a relatively dim, upside-down and backwards image really forces you to look at the image. You have to look hard to see what's there and make all the small adjustments that can result in big changes in the photograph.

Since large-format cameras do not have built-in light meters, you will also need to determine the proper exposure. That's when a handheld ambient light meter comes in handy. Often, I want to shoot at f/64, so the exposure times will be relatively long. Besides the long exposures, the size and weight of the camera means that you will always be shooting on a tripod.

So is shooting large format worth all of this effort? Absolutely! The images from a large-format negative can make for spectacular photographs. If you have ever seen the work of Ansel Adams, you know what I mean. There is a depth of detail and quality that just does not exist in any other type of photography. Perhaps that is one reason his images have stood the test of time. Working with a large-format camera is also a great way to sharpen your eye and to improve

your photographic skills in general. After lugging forty or fifty pound of equipment around with you and shooting only twelve pictures in a day, you will gain a much better appreciation for the pioneers of photography.

Although there are several different sizes of large format, 4x5-inch and 8x10-inch are the two primary formats used. If you plan to make enlargements, you will most likely use a 4x5-inch model. An enlarger for this size negative is still reasonable for a home darkroom. Unless you have a lot of money and a lot of space, 8x10-inch negatives will probably be used only to make contact prints in a home darkroom. If that's your plan, you will need to be especially meticulous when composing your images, because there is no cropping. What you shoot is exactly what you'll have on your print.

■ If you feel yourself getting stuck in a rut, try experimenting.

When shooting large format, you must always use a tripod—a large, heavy, sturdy tripod. You will also need film holders, a loupe, a light meter, and a dark-cloth, plus a bag to carry all of your equipment. Large-format cameras are sold in pieces, though they are often packaged together as a kit. I love shooting with my 4x5 camera, but it's definitely not quick and easy.

Specialty Cameras. Some photographers like to experiment with specialty equipment, such as pinhole cameras, stereo cameras, and "toy" cameras. I once met a photographer who produced beautiful, ethereal images using a cheap plastic camera (with a genuine cheap plastic lens). The images were distorted, surreal, and quite beautiful—light leaks and all. Don't let your equipment limit you. She paid $20 for that camera and produced truly amazing images. Other people have used homemade pinhole cameras to produce unique photographs. Obviously, some of this equipment is experimental and not very predictable, but sometimes that's when the best images happen. If you feel yourself getting stuck in a rut, try experimenting. Even if you don't create any good images, it's still fun and can stimulate your imagination.

Electronic Flash

One definition of photography is painting with light. After all, without light, there is no photograph. However, it's the quality of light that differentiates a great image from a mediocre one. Ideally, you can use the natural available light to create the images you want, but that's not always possible. There are times when you need to augment the existing light with additional light—or provide all of the light yourself.

The first piece of lighting equipment you should consider is an electronic flash unit. These units attach to your camera and offer more flexibility than the simple pop-up flash that many cameras now include. With an electronic flash unit, you can angle the flash head in different directions. This is a very useful feature that will allow you to bounce the light off of the ceiling to avoid the harsh shadows caused by direct flash. Higher end flash units are generally more

LEFT—You can balance out harsh sunlight by using an on-camera flash to add some sparkle to your image.

RIGHT—Use an on camera flash (with a rotating head) to bounce the light off of the ceiling and avoid the harsh shadows caused by direct flash from pop-up units.

powerful and offer more features than lower cost models, so they are definitely worth the investment. Flash tends to use up batteries pretty quickly, so you may also want to consider adding a battery pack or rechargeable batteries to your kit. Otherwise, be sure to have a good supply of extra batteries on hand if you plan on doing a lot of flash photography. Flash units are also very good for use as fill light for outdoor shoots. They can add some sparkle to what may otherwise be a flat image.

Studio Equipment

If you want to work in a studio setting, you will need to buy some studio lights. I would recommend starting out with a good monolight and a medium-sized softbox. Additional lights would provide you more options, but you can create beautiful images with just a single light.

You will also need a light stand and a way to trigger the light. Most lights come packaged with a sync cord, but cords can be cumbersome in the studio. A remote trigger is a better option and allows you more freedom to move around while you shoot.

If you plan to use seamless paper or muslin backgrounds in your studio, you will also need a way to support them. There are many options available. The best choice will depend on your budget and the amount of space you have to work with.

Light Meter

A light meter is extremely useful for both studio and location shooting—in fact, it is almost impossible to set up and properly balance multiple lights in a studio

ABOVE—*A single light with a softbox attached (here, to camera right) can be used to create beautiful images in the studio. This is a typical lighting setup, including a reflector (here, to camera left).*

RIGHT—*This is the image taken with the previous setup.*

without a light meter. Additionally, you may encounter tricky lighting situations where a meter can help you to determine the proper exposure.

The best type of meter is one that can measure both ambient light and flash. These are called incident- or ambient-light meters, because they measure the light falling on the subject. The meter built into a camera, on the other hand, is a reflected-light meter. Because this type of meter measures the light bouncing off the subject, it can be fooled by very dark or very bright subjects. Ambient-light meters are not subject to the same failing, because they measure the light before it even strikes the subject.

Reflector

Sometimes all that is required to improve the light on your model is a little extra light to fill in (brighten) a shadow or even out the existing light. A re-

ABOVE—A large reflector can be used in the studio to fill in the shadow side of the model when using window light.

LEFT—The image taken with the previous setup.

A tripod is very useful for techniques that require long exposure times, such as painting with light.

flector is ideal for that purpose. Reflectors have the advantage of allowing you to see the changing effect of the light as you move them—something that isn't possible with flash.

Reflectors come in many different sizes. For outdoor shoots, I would recommend using a medium-sized one. Although larger reflectors can cover a larger area with light, they can be very difficult to control in windy conditions. Reflectors that collapse down into a smaller size are very portable and convenient for shooting on location. Because a reflector tends to move with the slightest breeze, it's best to have a person holding it when working outdoors. If you don't have an assistant, I recommend carrying a couple of clamps so that you can secure it in place.

Reflectors are also very useful in studio settings to balance out the light—especially if you are shooting with window light. Since wind is not an issue in the studio, a large reflector works well there.

Tripod

A tripod can be invaluable, especially in low lighting situations. Putting your camera on a tripod allows you to shoot with slower shutter speeds and produce sharp images. This means you can shoot at a lower ISO setting or stop your lens down to obtain greater depth of field. Tripods are also great when you want to try experimental techniques such as multiple exposures and painting with light, which require you to keep your camera still for long exposures.

There are three factors to consider when purchasing a tripod: size, weight, and cost. The larger and heavier your camera, the larger and sturdier your tripod will need to be. Avoid the temptation to think that bigger is better, though. Bigger is heavier, harder to carry, and usually more expensive—and size alone doesn't necessarily gain you anything. Try to find the smallest and lightest tripod that will hold your camera steadily with your heaviest lens attached. If you often carry a tripod a long way to get to shooting locations, consider getting a tripod made of graphite or fiberglass rather than metal. They are more expensive but are much lighter and easier to carry.

Lenses and Filters

Lenses. If you own a camera that allows you to exchange lenses, you will need to consider the best lens (or lenses) for your style of photography. Many cameras are sold as a kit with a basic lens, often called a "kit lens." Although these lenses are generally inexpensive and have limited capabilities, they are not a bad option for a starter lens. Most current kit lenses have good optics, but they tend to be limited in zoom range and minimum aperture. I have used my kit lens to create many beautiful images, and it has performed well in most situations.

If, while working with your current lens, you find you can't take the images you'd like, consider the features you need on your next lens. One limit that you may encounter is the focal length of the lens. Most modern lenses are zoom lenses with a relatively wide range, but there may be times when you need other choices like an extreme wide angle or a very long focal length. Also, consider how close you need to focus. Although many lenses have close focusing capabilities, if you need to get really close you should consider a macro lens. These lenses will allow you to focus even when you are only a few inches from your subject. If you frequently shoot in low light, or like to have a shallow depth of field, you will need a lens with a wider aperture, say f/2.8.

High-quality lenses are a worthwhile investment, but can cost over $1000. Consider your needs carefully before spending a large amount of money for a lens that may not be what you need. (Maybe your kit lens is not so bad after all!)

If you want to create images with a shallow depth of field, you will need a lens with a minimum aperture of at least f/2.8.

■ Soft-focus and warming filters can also be effective for shooting nudes.

Filters. Filters can be used to achieve certain effects in your images, such as soft focus and increased contrast. However, if you are shooting with a digital camera, many of the same effects can be created using image manipulation software, such as Photoshop. Because of this, filters are really of very limited use for digital photography. Some people like to keep a skylight or UV filter on their lens, basically to protect the front element from damage. Other than that, you probably won't use filters for digital photography.

Shooting with film is a different matter, especially if you shoot in black & white. There are several filters that can be very helpful. A polarizing filter is great for intensifying a cloudy sky or watery scene. Red and yellow filters can be used to increase the contrast of an image—and a red filter is a must-have for shooting with infrared film. Soft-focus and warming filters can also be effective for shooting nudes.

One factor to keep in mind when buying lenses is the filter size. If possible, try to buy lenses that accept the same size filter; otherwise you will need to buy a set of filters for each lens.

Memory Cards or Film

One of the major advantages of digital photography is the ability to store a large number of images in a compact space. An 8G memory card can hold hundreds or even thousands of images, depending on size and format; shooting a thousand images on film would require many, many rolls. Digital also allows you to change ISO on the fly, something you cannot do with film.

Whether you shoot film or digital, though, you will need to consider your image storage options—and this is not a place to skimp. Buy the best quality film or electronic storage media that you can afford and always bring more than you think you'll need. I once ran out of film on the first day of a three-day nude workshop and had to really scramble to find more. I have never let that happen again. Now, I decide on the maximum number of images I could possibly shoot and bring at least twice that much film or memory cards with me.

Computers and Software

Since photography has evolved into a digital medium, other components—such as computers, software, and printers—are also a vital part of your photographic arsenal.

If you are shooting digital images, you will need to able to download, store, and manipulate your images, so a computer is a must-have. The best option is a notebook computer so you can take it with you when you travel. Be sure to buy one with enough processing power and memory to run Photoshop.

A CD/DVD burner is also critical. You will want to make backup copies of your images and be able to create CDs for your models. If you are a frequent

traveler, be sure to consider size and weight as primary factors when researching notebooks. Carrying a large, heavy computer will be very cumbersome.

Photoshop is considered by many to be the standard in image-manipulation software. It is extremely powerful, extremely complex, and relatively expensive. It is a very powerful tool and there is a lot to learn if you want to fully utilize its capabilities. There are many workshops and courses on how to use all of the available features. Although I have been using Photoshop for many years, I suspect that I am only using a small percentage of its full capabilities.

If your editing needs (and/or budget) are modest, there are choices other than Photoshop for image manipulation software. One of the best options is Photoshop Elements, which costs less than $100—and after trying it out on several images, I've discovered that there is really nothing I do with Photoshop that I can't do with Elements. Several other vendors also offer imaging software. Some even offer trial versions so you can try it out before you buy. Do your research and try out several options. You should be able to find something that works well for you. There are even some freeware programs available that will allow you to perform some basic operations. It can be a good place to start for people on a tight budget.

When evaluating software, think about the functions you need to perform and look for a product that provides them. When first starting out, you will need to (at the very least) be able to crop images, change their size, adjust their brightness and contrast, correct the color balance, and remove or blend out unwanted items. You also need to be aware of the file formats you will be working with. All software will generally work with JPG files, but if you plan to shoot in a RAW format, you need to be sure that your software can handle it.

■ Creating quality prints from digital images can be an expensive proposition.

Creating quality prints from digital images can be an expensive proposition. If you want to make your own prints, you will require a good quality photo printer. There are many reasonably priced printers on the market from all of the major manufacturers. You really can't go wrong with any of them. Look for a photo-quality printer that will make prints in the size you need and be sure that it is compatible with your computer.

After you purchase your printer, paper and ink will become the major printing expense. Do your research. One printer I was considering buying used cartridges that were substantially more expensive than other choices I was evaluating. In the end, I made a different choice. Do not skimp on printing supplies. There are some cheaper alternatives out there, but if you want quality, you have to pay for it.

Also, be sure to use archival-quality products. If you would rather not do your own printing, find a good lab to make prints for you. They will also be helpful for making prints larger than your printer can handle.

Darkroom

If you want to shoot film, I think that having your own darkroom is a requirement. There are very few labs left that still do quality film processing or handmake prints to your specifications. When you do find such a place, the costs will generally be very high and there can be long turnaround times. There can also be concerns about having others process your nude images. Most labs are reputable, but you have no guarantees about where the images could wind up. A home darkroom alleviates these concerns. Besides, a large part of creating a great photograph from a negative happens in the darkroom, where you have total control over the print-making process. One of the main reasons for shooting film is so that you can make your own prints.

■ It is not necessary to buy an expensive camera to create great images.

The good news is, since digital has become the dominant format, used darkroom equipment is available at real bargain prices. I recently purchased a high quality used 4x5-inch enlarger with a timer, power supply, three lenses, column, and baseboard for $100. A few years ago this would have cost thousands of dollars. Much of my other darkroom equipment has come from garage sales, where I could buy a large box of darkroom stuff for about $5.

Before you set up a darkroom, be sure that you have a good supplier of photo paper and darkroom chemicals available. Although paper can be purchased online, liquid chemicals cannot legally be shipped. You will need to find a place to buy chemicals locally or buy powdered chemicals (so they can be shipped) and then mix them yourself.

When you set up your darkroom, it is best if you can find a permanent location. Obviously, it will need to be a place where you can have total darkness. You will also need running water and a drain, plus adequate ventilation. If you have to use a temporary setup, a bathroom can be a good choice. Just be considerate of other members of your household before you tie up the bathroom for hours at a time. If you have to use your kitchen, be very careful with the chemicals. You don't want to get them on surfaces where they could come into contact with food.

Final Thoughts

Be sure to think about all of your equipment needs and do your research before making purchases. Also, consider your budget. It is not necessary to buy an expensive camera to create great images. Don't let advertisers or equipment geeks tell you otherwise. Buy what works for you. Now that you have your equipment and you are comfortable using it, it's time to get ready for your photo shoot.

5. Preparing For a Shoot

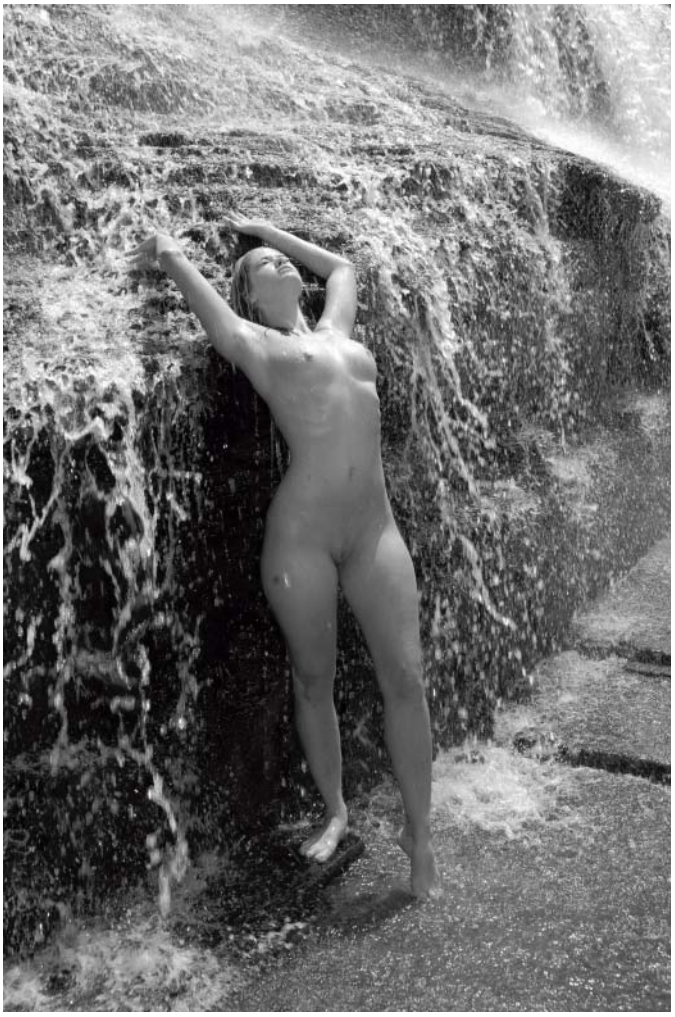
Before the Shoot

Several models have related stories to me about photographers who have scheduled a shoot with them. When the model arrives, however, the photographer doesn't really have any ideas in mind for what they'd like to shoot. Although that's a situation I try to avoid, I can understand how it happens. You meet a great model with some really beautiful images in her portfolio, so you ask her if she would be willing to work with you. To your great pleasure she agrees. So, you set up a date and time and are excited to create some beautiful photographs. It's not until she is standing in front of you that you realize you haven't really thought about what you'd like to shoot—and you have to struggle to come up with something on the fly. That's a situation that is easily avoided with some advance preparation.

Some photographers don't feel a need to prepare. They think that it is the model's job to know how to pose, so they don't have any ideas for images; they assume that the model will come in and just "model." The problem with that approach is that you are only going to get the poses she comes up with and they are likely to be poses that she has already done with many other photographers. Unless you want your images of her to look like what everyone else has shot, the onus is on you to give her something different to do at the shoot.

■ If you want to have a productive shoot, you need to prepare.

Location Shoots. If you want to have a productive shoot, you need to prepare. Having a great model is a good start, but you will also need to develop a concept for your shoot and then find a suitable location. Or, it can work the other way; you stumble across a great place to shoot, then develop image ideas using the location as your inspiration. In either case, you really need to think about the images you'd like to create. A beautiful natural setting with a creek and a waterfall may be great place to shoot, but going in totally unprepared will keep you from producing your best photographs. Consider if you want to shoot the model in front of the falls, lying at the base of the falls, behind the falls, or any combination. Do you want to produce fine-art black & white photographs or colorful glamour-style images?



TOP LEFT—*When planning a shoot at an outdoor location, think about how you want to use the natural surroundings in your images.*

TOP RIGHT—*If your model has to wear shoes because of the location, try to make them part of the story in the image.*

LEFT—*Have your model interact with her surroundings.*

Perhaps you are shooting at an old warehouse. Use the characteristics of the warehouse to influence the types of images you can shoot. What is the nature of the available light? Are there stairs, doorways, or other structures you can use? Is shooting on the roof a possibility? What does the floor look like? Can you shoot the model barefoot or will she need to wear shoes? If she needs shoes, what kind will work with the setting to tell a story?

Preparation is always important, but it can really pay off when shooting in a frequently used location. Without planning some new shots, your images from

ABOVE—*Think about variations that you can shoot in a frequently used location.*

that location will all start to look the same after a while. Think about images you have not yet photographed there. Perhaps you can use a different corner of the room, or different lighting in a familiar setting. Maybe you could shoot from a different perspective or try a point of view that you haven't used before. Potential is all around; you just need to keep an open mind.

Studio Shoots. Probably the most detailed planning is required for studio shoots. Without a very specific plan, you could wind up with a model standing on a white background, staring at you, waiting for direction. Without some creative ideas, you can come away with some uninspired images. When planning a studio shoot, try to consider the attributes that your model brings to the shoot. Is she an athlete or a dancer? Does she have a soft look or dark features? Is she slim or curvy? Does she have long hair or short? Any of these features can suggest photographs that you could create.

RIGHT—*Without a specific plan for a studio shoot, you could wind up with a model standing on a white background, staring at you, waiting for direction.*

Create a Script. I usually create a script for my shoot—especially for studio shoots. I list the images I plan to create, in the basic order I want to shoot them. This serves as my general guide for the shoot, not as a rigid list. As we work through the items, new ideas for images will often occur. The model may contribute her own thoughts for variations of poses, or you may see something new as you work through an idea. When the shoot starts to slow down and we reach

Consider using your model's personal attributes when planning images. Is she athletic (right, top and bottom)? Is she a dancer (left, top and bottom)?

LEFT—Emphasizing long hair.

RIGHT—A pregnant model.

a "What's next?" point, I just look at the script and say, "Oh yeah—let's do this." Before I started making these scripts, I would sometimes forget something that I really wanted to shoot and miss the opportunity to create a great image.

A very useful tool for generating a shoot script is a photo idea list. As thoughts for photographs come to me, I jot them down on my list. Some are very specific and others are just general concepts. I then group them logically (for example, "white studio background," "around the house," "in the woods," etc.). Potential images are all around, so I never know when inspiration will strike. I try to keep my eyes open and stay receptive to my surroundings. Scouting for locations is also very helpful. Go out with the specific goal of finding a good place to shoot. As you explore the location, jot down any image ideas that occur to you.

Another good source of items for your list is variations of images you have already created. After seeing your finished photographs, you will often see something that you could have done better—or a concept that you could have explored further. Unresolved images inspire me to want to try again. Wherever the ideas come from, your list will become a valuable resource for planning for a shoot.

Develop a Plan for the Session. Another reason I started to plan my shoots is because there were times when a model wanted to know what we were going to shoot and I didn't have a good answer for her. When contacting someone about modeling for you, it is important to be clear about the details of the shoot. Besides providing basic information about the images you plan to shoot, you will need to supply other details like what she needs to bring to the shoot. If you don't know what you'll be shooting, how do you know what she'll need

to bring along? Models have also asked about makeup. Telling her that it's an artistic shoot as opposed to glamour should give her a good idea of what makeup is appropriate.

Depending on the type of shoot, you may need to obtain some props or equipment that you do not currently possess. You can make a prop list as you write your script. Sometimes items can be provided by the model, but you may need to buy or borrow others. Props can actually be the basis for a shoot. One model told me that she had a box of her grandmother's costume jewelry that we could use for a shoot. Each style of jewelry created a different mood. Pearls suggested elegance and "hippy beads" created a fun and playful mood. One year, around Halloween time, a large twisted branch landed in my yard. It has turned out to be a great prop for several different images—especially dark, mysterious shots.

The model may be able to supply some accessories, such as jewelry.

Much of the additional photographic equipment that I own was purchased for a specific image I wanted to create. For example, a tripod and a cable release were required for some multiple-exposure images I wanted to shoot with a dancer. Shooting outdoors in various lighting situations made a reflector a very useful tool. A lens with an f/2.8 aperture made it possible to shoot in low lighting. Let your needs drive your equipment purchases. If you need an expensive piece of equipment for just one shoot, you may want to consider renting or borrowing it. If you don't have exactly what you need for a specific shot, you can always improvise with what you have available, or come up with a variation of the shot.

A crooked branch that happened to land in my yard made an effective prop for a dark Halloween-themed image.

Be sure that you have everything available before the model arrives. You don't want to find yourself in a situation where you are scrambling around looking for props or equipment during the shoot. You should also ensure that your model is prepared by providing her with all of the necessary details. She will of course need to know the date, time, and location of the shoot and how to reach you if necessary. Also ask her for her cell phone number, in case you need to call her. Be sure to tell her about anything she needs to bring along such as shoes, jewelry, and other accessories. Remind her to have her identification with her, as well, so you can verify her age.

Unless you want to spend a lot of time editing out marks on her skin, you should ask your model to wear loose-fitting clothes and no bra or underwear to the shoot. She will also want to know about hair and makeup. If you are shooting at a location, she should wear something that she can easily slip on and off like a loose-fitting dress.

The Day of the Shoot

On the day of the shoot, there are several tasks that will need to be completed before the model arrives. If you are working at a location, you will need to

Depending on the shoot you may need to set up equipment, such as a posing box.

gather all of your equipment for the shoot ahead of time and pack it up. This is where your preparation will really help. If you know what and where you are shooting, you will know exactly what equipment you will need to bring along for the shoot. Be sure to include any "just in case" accessories and any backup equipment you have available—after all, mechanical failure can strike at the worst time. You don't have to carry everything with you while you shoot, but it's good to have things available in your car just in case they are needed. Don't forget to bring a model release, a pen, and your shooting script. It's not a bad

idea to keep a couple of extra model releases folded up in your camera bag, too, just in case you do forget to bring one.

Choose Your Backgrounds. Once you arrive at your location, the first thing you should do is scout out your surroundings and decide where you'd like to shoot first. After you determine your first shooting location, set up any required equipment. If you are shooting in the woods, there will probably not be much to set up, maybe just a reflector or a strobe light. However, if you are shooting inside a house or other building, you may need to configure one or more lights and possibly arrange some props.

When shooting in a studio, there will usually be a substantial amount of preparation that needs to be done before the model arrives. Start out by getting the background in place. The decision on the color and type of background will depend on the mood of the shoot. A white seamless background is best for bright, high-key images. Black can be used to create a dark, low-key mood. Gray provides a neutral setting, while muslin creates a more classic look and feel. Refer to your shooting script to decide on which background to set up first.

Add Props. Next, you should place any props on the background that you will be using for your first images. This can be as simple as a chair or as elaborate as a full set. Try to shoot your most complex setups first so that you have time to set everything up before the model arrives. Any major set changes you have to make during the shoot will take time away from your photography—plus your model will be left sitting around waiting for you to get ready. Try to keep the changes simple and straightforward.

Set Up Your Lights. Once everything is in place, you can position and adjust your lights. Take your light readings using a flash meter while standing where you plan to place the model. You may need to make some fine adjustments once the model is there, but you should basically be ready to go.

Camera Settings. For most types of shoots, it is best to use your camera in the manual mode and to adjust all of the settings yourself. That gives you the most control and provides the best chance for repeatable results. First, use the readings from your light meter to adjust the exposure settings on your camera. Most cameras have a flash-sync speed of $\frac{1}{125}$ second, so basically you are just concerned about the f-stop. Studio work is generally done at around f/8, though this can be changed if you want to adjust the depth of focus. Be sure that the ISO setting on your camera matches the setting on the meter.

■ For most types of shoots, it is best to use your camera in the manual mode.

Next the correct white balance setting will need to be input into your camera. Many cameras have precalibrated settings such as sun, shade, and flash, which work well enough in many situations. Since studio lights can vary, I would recommend using an aid to manually set the white balance. I use a black-gray-white target that can be used to create a custom white-balance setting

through the camera. Whenever possible, I would recommend reading the white balance manually, to ensure that it is right on target. That's especially true in mixed lighting situations.

Be sure to verify all of your other camera settings before you start shooting. It would be a real shame to get into postproduction before you realize that you don't have any usable images from your shoot because one of your settings was wrong.

Of course, all of this advice is for digital photography. If you are shooting black & white film, the only settings you really need to adjust are the f-stop and shutter speed. With color film, you would also need to ensure that you are using the proper type of film to match the primary light source. Since there is no preview available when working with film to verify your settings, it is important to double-check everything before you begin.

Take Test Images. Once your digital camera is set up, and everything is in place, fire off a test shot and preview the image. Make any necessary adjustments and then try another test shot. Repeat this process until everything looks right. Don't let your screen fool you into changing the exposure. Many cameras have a very bright view screen and may lead you to believe that you are overexposing your images. Instead look at the histogram and trust your light meter readings. Now you are ready to start working with your model.

Welcome the Model. The first order of business when the model arrives, after greeting her and showing her around, is having her sign the model release. Have the release ready and be sure to have a pen available for her to use. I also like to give the model a business card and show her my portfolio. Get all of that ready ahead of time. If it's going to be a long shoot, it's nice to have some snacks and beverages available. Try to have those ready to go, too. Playing music during a studio shoot helps to create a nice working environment, so that should also be set up when the model arrives.

For most shoots, it's best to take manual readings for color balance and exposure. A black-gray-white target is a very helpful tool for taking those readings.

Final Thoughts

Being well prepared for a shoot has many benefits. Not only does it maximize the potential of the shoot, it also reduces your stress level, because you know you are ready. It also leaves your model with a good impression. She knows that you work in a professional manner and is therefore more likely to work with you again and to recommend you to other models. Now, it's finally time to shoot.

6. The Anatomy of a Shoot

It's the day of the shoot and you're really excited! You booked a great model, found an interesting location, and have a script with some creative ideas for unique images. You can't wait to get the camera into your hands and start shooting some great photographs.

But before you can start shooting, you need to ensure that everything is ready. One of the biggest keys to having a successful photo shoot is preparation, as outlined in the previous chapter. Nothing puts you at more of a disadvantage than having your model show up while you are still scrambling around trying to get ready. Not only does it give a poor first impression, you are more likely to overlook something because you feel rushed. If at all possible, try to have everything ready at least half an hour before the model is scheduled to arrive. That will give you some time to relax and mentally prepare for the shoot. Also, if setting up for the shoot takes longer than expected, you will still have time to finish your preparations. Plus, if your model shows up early, which can sometimes happen (especially if she is traveling a long distance or is unfamiliar with your neighborhood), you will still be ready for her.

When the Model Arrives

■ When your model arrives, welcome her and try to make her feel comfortable.

Establish a Good Rapport. When your model arrives, welcome her and try to make her feel comfortable. If this is your first time working together, take some time to get to know each other. If she is an old friend, or someone you have worked with in the past, this is a good time to reconnect. Establishing good rapport before the shoot is very important; it can make your time together much more fun and productive.

Start off by showing her around the location, including the changing area and the restroom. Hopefully, in your pre-shoot communications, you told your model to wear loose-fitting clothes and no bra or underwear. Otherwise, you will be spending many hours in postproduction removing marks on her skin. If you suspect that she may have forgotten, you may want to ask her to change into a robe now. That will give the marks from tight-fitting clothes some time

to fade. If you are shooting outdoors, ask her to wear something that's easy to slip on and off quickly. While you are showing her around the location, share some of your ideas for images. You can say something like, "The natural light is beautiful here. We could do a great shot of you looking out the window." That will let her know that you have thought out your image ideas, which should boost her confidence level.

Escorts. Some models like to bring someone with them to the shoot as an escort—especially if they are working with you for the first time. You will have to decide if that's something you want to allow. In my experience, escorts are not usually an issue, though they can be a distraction. Other photographers have relayed horror stories to me about jealous boyfriends and escorts stealing from them while they are distracted by the shoot. Hopefully, the model will tell you before the shoot that she plans to bring someone with her so you can discuss your ground rules and make sure she understands that her companion should not interfere with the shoot. The most difficult situation is when a model shows up with an unexpected escort. That's why it always best to work out all of the details of the shoot ahead of time, including escorts.

Model Releases. Before you start shooting, you should have your model read and sign the model release. If you don't have a model release form, they are available from several sources. I found my release on the Internet. As part of my release form, I include a section for the model's address, phone number, and e-mail address. That way I have all of her contact information on one document. Be sure to discuss usage rights with your model and let her know your

Makeup can be important for glamour images. Be sure your model knows if this is the type of image you plan to create.

Makeup is usually not an issue for fine-art images.

plans for the images. If there are any questions or issues, now is the time to work them out, not after the shoot is done. Otherwise, you could wind up with a bunch of images that you can't use. Since you are shooting nudes, it is also important to check her identification. All of my nude models are at least eighteen years old. If you are unsure about the legal concerns of shooting nude images, there are many sources of information about this subject on the Internet. To avoid any potential legal issues, I would recommend always working with models who are at least eighteen years old. Also, whenever possible, make a copy of her ID and file it with the signed model release. If you are shooting on location, you can just take a picture of her ID.

■ I would recommend always working with models who are at least eighteen years old.

Styling. Once you have taken care of the paperwork, your model can prepare for the shoot. Show her to the changing area and discuss what you'd like for the first look. When you are first starting out, you will probably not have a makeup artist available. Be sure your model is aware of the fact that she will need to do her own makeup. My preference is for simple, natural looking makeup—and most models can usually handle that by themselves. In fact, some

art models do not wear makeup at all, which is generally not an issue for fine-art shoots. It can be important for glamour shots, though, so plan accordingly.

Depending on the type of shoot, and your model's expertise with makeup, you can experiment with bolder looks. If you think you may need a makeup

Depending on your model's expertise with makeup, or the availability of a makeup artist, you can experiment with bolder looks to create dramatic images.

When styling an image, think about the mood you are trying to convey. Here, it's natural and innocent.

The styling of this image supports the sophisticated, retro mood of the shot.

The bold and aggressive look we wanted for this image is reflected in the styling.

For another look, try styling an image to create a fun and funky mood.

artist for your shoot, you can probably find one online or your model may know someone who can do her makeup for the shoot.

You also need to consider the model's hairstyle and accessories for each setting. When making those choices, keep in the mind the style of the shot and the mood you want to create in your images. Are you going for natural and innocent? Sleek and sophisticated? Bold and aggressive? Quirky and unique? Each will have its own styling requirements. The model's look can also influence these decisions. Does she have long or short hair? Is she lean or curvy? Does she have tattoos or piercings?

Start the Photography

After the model is ready, it's time to make your way to the first shooting location. Double check your lighting and give her a chance to get ready. If you have music available, turn it on. Hopefully you can both agree on something to play. You could ask the model to bring some of her own music. That way it'll be something that she likes—and you may even discover something new for your own music collection. Actually, once I start shooting, I don't even notice the music, so I'm not too concerned about what's playing.

Take Some Test Shots. You should consider the first few images you shoot to be test shots. They are basically to check your lighting and camera settings. After reviewing these images, make any necessary adjustments and take additional test shots until you get things right. Don't worry too much about the pose for these images. Just tell your model that you need to check the lighting and ask her to assume a comfortable pose. It's actually surprising how many times these first few images actually turn out to be good photographs—maybe because they have a relaxed and natural feel to them. In any case, after I get a good test shot, I will usually show it to the model, so she has an idea of how the images will look. Now we are finally ready to get to work!

■ You should consider the first few images you shoot to be test shots.

Directing the Model. It has been my experience that you should always be prepared to direct your model during a shoot. Even experienced models appreciate some direction, though they don't usually require as much guidance as newer models. It really surprises me to hear about photographers who do not direct their models at all. How do they get the images they want? Do they just expect the model to come in and pose for them?

I had the great pleasure of working with a wonderful, experienced model and dancer from London, who is truly a talented poser. All I had to do was give her a concept—like, "Let's shoot some strong, powerful images."—and she would run with the idea. She needed no further direction, other than an occasional minor adjustment. After working with hundreds of models, of varying experience levels, I have found that she has an extremely rare gift. Most models, even experienced ones, need more direction than that.

Although experienced models can come up with their own poses, you should always be prepared to provide some direction.

Be ready to give direction, but be careful not to over-direct. If you try to control every aspect of the pose, you risk losing all spontaneity; your images can wind up looking very stiff and posed. Try to find a good middle ground that works for you. This will need to be based on your model's ability and experience as well as your comfort level and skill in giving direction. (Specific techniques for posing will be covered in greater detail in chapter 7.)

Preview the Images and Provide Feedback. As you build rapport with your model during a shoot, and you both get more comfortable working together, the pictures will tend to get better. Preview the images on a regular basis to confirm that you are capturing what you expect. Tell your model that you are getting some great shots and don't hesitate to show her some of the previews—but try not to do that too often, or you can disrupt the flow the shoot.

It is very important to encourage your model during a shoot, especially when working with a newer model. Models have told me that they hate when photographers don't say anything while they are shooting. They have no idea how it's going and don't know if the photographer is getting what they want. I ac-

tually really enjoy talking to my models during a shoot, so that's not an issue for me. I would encourage you to do the same. It not only provides her with feedback, but the shoot also tends to be more fun if you keep up the communication. Even if verbal communication is not possible, feedback is still important. I have worked with several deaf models and although our communication was non-verbal, I still provided feedback via gestures or written notes. Have fun with it. Miming poses for models is usually good for a smile and definitely improves the mood of the shoot.

If at some point the images are not heading in a positive direction, don't share that information with your model. Just say that you want to change the pose or that you need to adjust the lighting. Then, take that opportunity to move the shoot in a different direction. You always want to maintain a positive atmosphere during the shoot, so be aware of how you provide feedback.

No matter what you planned to shoot, try to be open to what you are seeing in the viewfinder. Some of the best images can be spontaneous and unexpected. Trust your instincts and push the button when you see something you like in the viewfinder. Stay with it and get your model involved. Tell her that you like the way she looked when she was adjusting her hair or staring off into the distance. You can always go back to your script when this new direction runs its course, but don't let it go too quickly.

Maintain the Correct Demeanor. Your interactions, while working with a model, will very much depend on your personal relationship with her. If she is a total stranger with whom you are working for the first time, you need to start out with a very professional and somewhat serious demeanor. As you get to know her personality, go along with it. If she likes to have fun and joke around, it's okay to lighten the mood. If she is more serious and quiet, you should respect that and maintain a more professional atmosphere.

You should never touch a nude model without her permission. Even *with* her permission, it's best to avoid any physical contact unless it is really necessary. You can never really be sure of how a stranger will react or what she will tell others.

■ Even with her permission, it's best to avoid any physical contact unless it is really necessary.

If the model is your wife or girlfriend, then it is of course an entirely different matter. The same applies for a friend or a model you've worked with many times before. Let your relationship with the model dictate what is appropriate behavior during the shoot.

Establish a Pace. You will need to find a good pace at which to shoot, one that works for both you and your model. I prefer to work at a slower pace and really try to pay attention to details. However, when I work with dancers or athletes, I sometimes need to shoot quickly to keep up with the action. Other photographers prefer to work at a faster pace. They shoot a lot of frames and have many images from which to choose. Experiment and try to find what works best for you. Be careful not to work too slowly, though, or your model

may start to get bored. You could also miss some spontaneous images. However, if you work too quickly, you may be compromising quality. You could get unwanted objects (like light stands) in the shot or accidentally cut off a hand or a foot—all because you didn't take the time to really look at the image in the viewfinder. Try not to get locked into just one rhythm. Each shoot is different, so be prepared to adapt to the situation.

The Duration of the Shoot. Although it is typical to do a timed photo shoot, I don't like to watch the clock while I shoot. I explain to my models that I like to work until we are both satisfied and happy with the images we have created. Most models seem to be willing to accept my approach and are willing to be flexible with their schedule. I do try not to take advantage of that arrangement. When shooting in the studio, we normally finish in around two hours. Location shoots can take longer, especially if we are traveling between different spots. Some models do insist on time-limited shoots. In those cases, I usually tell them to plan on two hours. Similarly, if you are renting a studio you will probably need to reserve the space, and therefore shoot, for a specific and limited period of time. I just hate to stop a shoot because time is up—especially if we are in a good rhythm and are creating great images.

Adjust your shooting pace for each shoot. You may need to work quickly to keep up with a dancer or fast-moving model.

When working with a model I may not get a chance to photograph again, I will sometimes go for a longer shoot. However, I find that it can start getting "stale" after a couple of hours. Use your best judgment, if you sense that happening, and end the shoot.

Concluding the Session

After you finish shooting, let the model get dressed and be sure that she has all of her belongings. If this is a paid shoot, you should pay her now. If you agreed to provide her with images, let her know when to expect them. If you are shooting anywhere except in your studio or home, be sure that you have gathered all of your belongings, as well. Thank your model and walk her to the exit or to her car. If it was a good shoot, tell her that you would love to work with her again. Even it wasn't a great shoot, always try to end the shoot on a positive note; thank her and try to say something nice.

7. Posing a Model

Posing your model can be a challenge, but it is a key element to creating a great nude photograph. An intriguing pose will engage your viewer and pull them into the image. Conversely, a poorly posed photograph will likely not get a second look. In this chapter, I will share some of the techniques I use during my shoots to help pose my model. The reason I say "help pose my model" is because posing is a collaborative process. The model and photographer need to work together to come up with great poses. If poses only come from one person, you will most likely not create the best work possible from the shoot. (*Note:* Some additional posing tips, organized by genre, appear in chapter 1.)

Poses to Get a Shoot Started

With inexperienced models, start with a basic standing pose and then try variations.

An experienced model can come up with some unique poses without much guidance, but that's not usually the case for a newer model. When working with a less experienced model, I will often begin with some simple basic standing poses, just to get the shoot started. I have the model stand, looking into the camera, and then explore variations. I may ask her to look away or to look down. She may change the angle of her body, the position of her legs and arms, or her overall posture. We work the pose to see where it will take us and often find interesting images along the way. Using this method, you may notice that the first few images from each of your shoots are similar, but that's okay. As you work with each model, unique images begin to emerge. The point is to get the session rolling. This is also a good opportunity for your model to relax and get comfortable working with you.

Keep Your Eyes Open

One way to find original poses is to watch your model as she moves. Some of the best poses occur spontaneously. These types of image are appealing because they are organic, which is to say they occur naturally. They reflect the way that a person would normally act without really thinking about it, as opposed to trying to pose for the camera. For example, one of my favorite images is that of a

FACING PAGE—Some of the best poses can occur spontaneously, so keep your eyes open. I saw this image while a model was toweling off after getting wet for some shots.

TOP LEFT AND RIGHT—Experienced models can usually come up with some unique poses—even without much direction.

BOTTOM LEFT—This image happened on a windy day during a rooftop shoot.

BOTTOM RIGHT—Always be ready to shoot. One of my favorite images is this one of a model gathering her things after a shoot.

model gathering her belongings after a shoot. There is something very honest and appealing about that shot. Luckily, I had not yet put away my camera and was ready to grab the image.

Some Fundamental Principles

Turn the Body to an Angle. Most models will look better turned at an angle rather than straight on. When the model is turned straight toward the camera, you are seeing the widest, flattest view of her body. Turning her body to an

LEFT—Most models will look better turned at angle rather than straight on. Thrusting the hips will also create a nice S-shaped curve, which is very flattering.

RIGHT—Explore the pose and try different variations.

LEFT—Awkwardly placed hands are a common mistake that should be avoided.

RIGHT—Be aware of the placement of the hands. They need to become part of the pose.

angle makes the waist and hips look slimmer. It can also better reveal the curves of the female body.

Look for Lines and Curves. Thrusting the hips will create a nice S-shaped curve which is very flattering. Poses with curves in them will generally be more interesting than static poses. Strong lines and angles can also create powerful poses. Always look for ways to make a pose more dynamic.

Observe the Hands. Also, be aware of the placement of the hands. Awkwardly placed hands are a common mistake that should be avoided. They need

to become part of the pose. To do this, give them something to hold or a place to rest. They should not dangle or be allowed to fall at awkward angles.

Work Toward the Main Light. Unless you want to cast your model into a shadow, it is usually best to have her work her poses towards the main light source. For some reason many models—even experienced ones—have a natural tendency to turn away from the light. Try to be aware of that tendency and correct her position when necessary. As you move from standing, to sitting, to lying-down poses, stay aware of the lighting and watch for unwanted shadows. Make adjustments if needed.

RIGHT—Poses with curves in them will generally be more interesting than static poses.

ABOVE—Strong lines and angles can also create powerful poses. Always look for ways to make a pose more dynamic.

ABOVE—A chair or a stool can work as a very effective prop for nude modeling.

LEFT—The model doesn't necessarily need to sit. She can use the chair or stool to put a foot on or lean on.

Add Props to Facilitate Posing

Props can be very useful for helping the model with her poses. They give her something to interact with and something to do besides just stand there. Chairs and stools can be great for nude poses, but you will need to watch the way the model uses them. It is best to have her sit toward the edge of the chair. Also watch the positioning of her feet and legs. The model doesn't necessarily need to sit. She can use the chair or stool to put a foot on or lean on. When having her lean, be careful not to let her put too much weight on her arms. That can create an unattractive bulge in her upper arm. Also watch out for locked elbows, knees, or other joints. They look much better relaxed and slightly bent.

Other props can suggest image ideas and poses. Something as simple a sheer piece of fabric or a branch can help a model create poses.

LEFT—*Try to create interesting shapes when using kneeling or sitting poses.*

ABOVE—*Avoid having the model kneel directly on her feet with her knees facing toward the camera (top photo). Have her place her feet to one side instead (bottom photo).*

Try Sitting and Kneeling Poses

Sitting and kneeling poses can be great, but try to come up some original ideas. Look for interesting shapes and lines. Avoid having her kneel down directly on her feet with her knees facing toward the camera; this can truncate the body in an awkward way. Have her place her feet off to one side or shoot from the side.

Try Reclining Poses

There are many poses you can do with the model lying on the floor. Strive to accentuate the model's curves—especially the hips. You can also try getting eye-to-eye with your model to create an intimate image or shoot from above to produce something more abstract.

Let the Location Inspire You

If you are shooting on location, let the setting suggest poses to you. Both natural and man-made places can provide the opportunity for creative posing. As the model works within the setting, watch for poses you'd like to shoot. Provide her with feedback and suggestions and keep trying different variations. Sometimes she may misunderstand what you meant, but that's okay. She may

TOP LEFT—*You can get eye-to-eye with your model to create an intimate photograph.*

TOP RIGHT—*Shoot from above to produce an abstract image.*

BOTTOM RIGHT—*When the model is lying down, strive to accentuate her curves—especially the hips.*

If you are shooting on location, let the setting suggest poses to you. Both natural and man-made places can provide the opportunity for creative posing.

actually give you a great, unexpected pose. You can always then pursue your idea as well.

Final Thoughts

There are no hard and fast rules for posing a model. A good pose is one that works for the photograph you are trying to create. Remember your style and objective for the shoot as you try different poses, but keep an open mind and have your camera ready. Many of the best poses occur spontaneously. If you are not sure about a pose, shoot it. You can always delete it later if it's not a good image, but you can never get back an image you didn't shoot.

8. Image Handling and Editing

Although most of this chapter will deal with the postproduction of digital images, it does also includes some information on film handling, where appropriate.

Make Backup Copies of Your Files

After a photo shoot you are usually really excited to see what you have created, so there is a great temptation to sit down at your computer and look at the images. However it's best to resist that urge—at least until you have an extra copy of your originals safely stored away. Even if you are careful, it is possible to accidentally hit the wrong key and lose or alter an image by mistake. If you have a backup copy, that's not a big deal; you can always restore the original. If not, you could lose one of your favorite shots.

My "day job" is as a database administrator. One of my primary duties is to ensure that our data is always recoverable—even in the event of a disaster. I use that same mentality for the protection of my image files. After a shoot, I copy all of the files from my camera onto my computer. I then copy all of the files again to an external hard drive and then burn them onto a DVD. Once I have three solid copies of the files, one of which is stored "off-line," I feel it is safe to reformat the memory card, cleaning it out for the next shoot.

■ You may even want to consider keeping a copy of your images off-site.

This may seem a little extreme, but after hearing more than one horror story about photographers losing all of their images because a hard drive crashed, I feel that it's better to err on the side of caution. Blank CDs and DVDs are very inexpensive and losing your images can be tragic—but this tragedy is easily avoided by making multiple backup copies. You may even want to consider keeping a copy of your images off-site, in a different location, in case of a catastrophe such as a flood or a fire.

Take a Moment to Enjoy Your Results

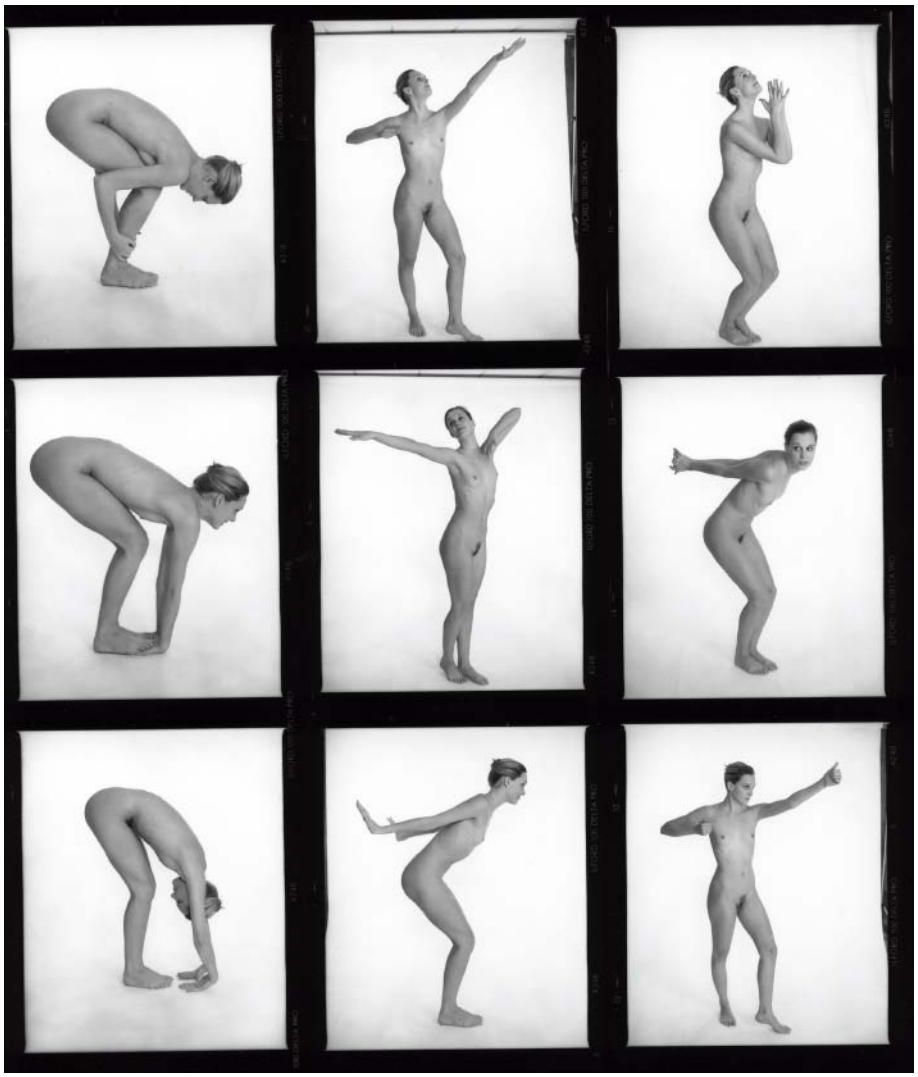
After making backup copies of your images, feel free to take a first look at your images, but save the real editing for later. Right after a shoot, your emotions are

likely to be riding high, so it is not a good time to look at the images objectively. For now, just sit back and enjoy the results of all of your planning and hard work.

When shooting film, I found that I usually shot more rolls of film than I really wanted to develop by hand. I am fortunate to have an excellent lab nearby that will process my film at a very reasonable price. If you are not as lucky, try to find a good lab that provides mail-order service. If you plan to process your film yourself, try to get into the darkroom as soon as possible after the shoot. After developing the film, it is very helpful to make contact sheets of all of the negatives and use those for evaluating your images. A magnifier or loupe is very helpful for seeing the details in the small proofs.

First-Cut Editing

It's usually best to let the images "rest" for a few days before you start your real editing. You need to let the memories of the shoot fade a little, so that you



When working with film, contact sheets are very useful for evaluating images.

can be more objective when evaluating the shots. Try to find a time when your mind is clear and calm—a time when you have enough time so that you don't feel rushed.

For your first-cut edit, you are trying to decide if you should keep an image or not. Essentially, you are trying to determine if this is a good image or if it has the potential to be made into something good.

The answer to that question tends to be personal. What I think is a great image may not really appeal to you. A model may love a shot that you regarded as nothing special, while a total stranger may have a totally different perspective. Unless it's a commercial shoot, the only opinion that really matters is your own. These are *your* images, so they need to be pleasing to you, first and foremost.

When evaluating your work, think about the potential of an image. At first glance, it may not seem to be anything special—but perhaps it has the potential to be made into a compelling image.

Less is better when it comes to altering images. If you overdo it, the photograph can start to look artificial.

If others appreciate them as well, that's great—but that should not be your main consideration.

Your instincts are usually correct, so trust your gut when evaluating images. If a shot strikes you as a good image, put it on your list of keepers. There must be something appealing about it that drew you in.

Try to disregard your memories and feelings about taking the shot. Just look at the results. Is it a great image? Or does it have the potential to be made into one? The shot may have been a fun idea, or difficult to create, but that doesn't make it a great photograph. If you had a great idea that *didn't* translate into a good image, put it on your list to shoot again and try to do it better the next time.

Keep in mind that this is a first-cut edit. If in doubt, keep the image for now. You can always weed it out later. During this edit, keep the images you plan to work on and delete the rest. Remember that you have backup copies and can always get the other images back, if necessary.

A Second Evaluation

Once you have edited down the images you'd like to work on, open the first file with your editing software and do a second evaluation. Take a close look. Do you still think it's a good image? Will it produce a photograph you will like? If not, close it and move on. Sometimes you need to look at the image more closely to really know what you think. Or you may start working with an image and realize that it is not going to yield what you expected. If you think a shot has potential, but it's just not happening right now, close it for now—but don't delete it. You can always come back to it another time.

Less is More

A word of caution before you start altering your images: less is more. It is very easy to get carried away and to overdo the changes. Subtle alterations are often all that is needed to improve your image. You don't want your editing to look too obvious or overdone. It can make the image seem artificial. If you were careful to get all of the camera settings right during the shoot, and did a good job of exposing the image, very little editing should be required.

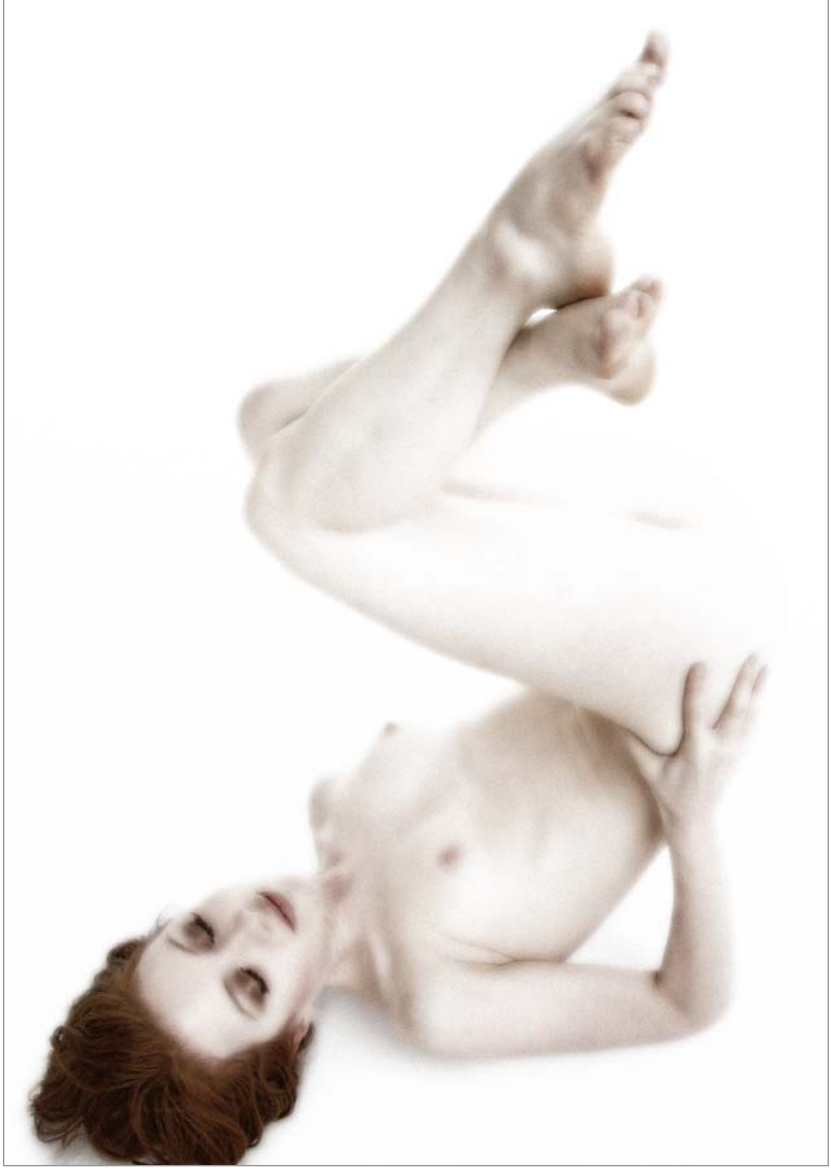
Cropping

Once you have the image open, you can begin to make your adjustments. Start by cropping the image and adjusting the size. While you should keep your finished product in mind, try not to get too locked into specific dimensions. For example, if you plan to make an 8½x11-inch print, you may be inclined to size the image to 8x10½-inches to leave a ¼-inch border, but that may not be what works best for the image. Unless you have specific sizing requirement, a better approach is to do a free-form crop of the image to make it look its best. Then, while maintaining the relative proportions, you can adjust the size to fit on the paper.

Crop the photograph to fit the image. Don't get too locked into specific dimensions. Sometimes a square crop, rather than a rectangle, works best.

Evaluate the Exposure, Brightness, and Contrast

Because it will impact all of your other adjustments, you should first evaluate and adjust the overall exposure level of the image. If you shot it in RAW mode, this adjustment can be made while opening the image. Once the image is open, you can also use curves and level to correct the exposure. Next, adjust the brightness and contrast levels. While doing that, consider the mood of the image. Should it be darker or lighter? Are there details that



Adjust the brightness and contrast to fit the mood of the image—whether it's dark and moody or bright and glowing.

you want to enhance or obscure? To be sure you are getting what you want, carefully watch the highlights and shadows as you make your adjustments. It's easy to unintentionally blow out details or to lose things that you want to see in the shadows. Trust your eye and keep making changes until you see what you like.

Consider the Color Balance

Once the exposure, brightness, and contrast are where you want them, it's time to consider the color balance. Since every monitor and printer is different, adjusting the color balance can be a little tricky. It will help if you calibrate your hardware; these techniques are beyond the scope of this book, but there is a lot of information available in other books or on the Internet. As you are getting started with your particular editing program and hardware, you can learn a lot simply by trial and error.

You should also consider if your image would look better in black & white. If you think it might, convert it to monochrome and take a look. You may need

to bounce back and forth between color and black & white a few times before you decide. You may even want to save a version of both.

Retouching

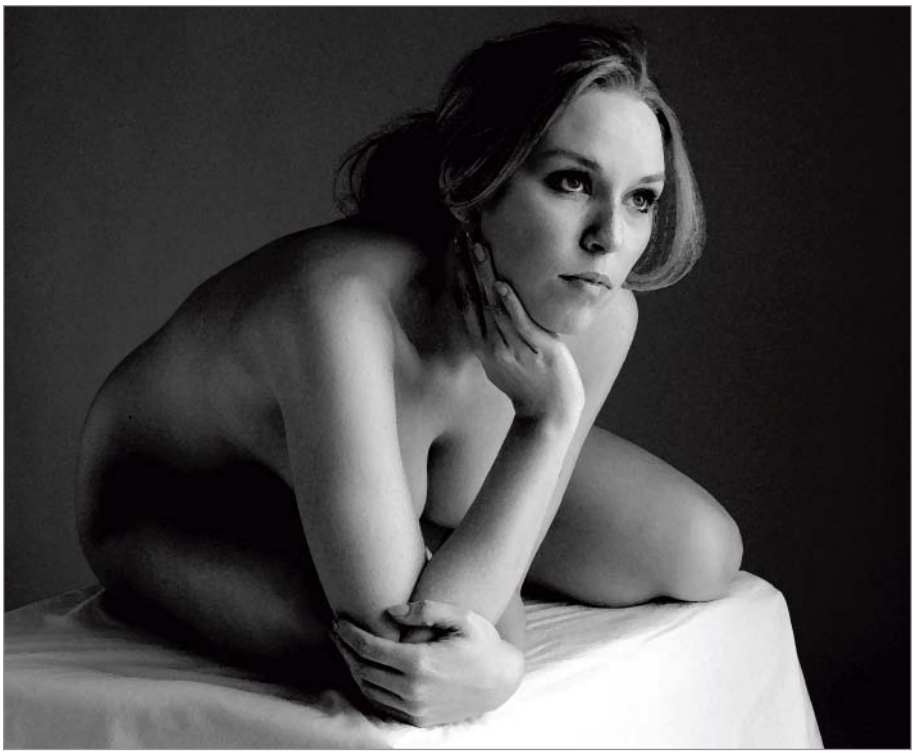
The next step is to blend out, or remove, anything that you don't want in your image using the available software tools, such as a Clone tool. It could be something distracting in the background or just a stray hair. When dealing with your model's imperfections, this becomes a judgment call. Do you want to remove a mole or a scar? Should you blend in some skin discoloration? What about prominent veins? If your model has tattoos, do they add or distract from what the photograph is trying to say? How to deal with these issues is up to you. Just remember that people have imperfections, so removing all of them—completely smoothing the skin—can create an artificial look, making the model look more like a mannequin than a person. Tattoos, in particular, can be a sensitive subject to some models. Some get offended if you remove them; some don't want their tattoo in the photograph at all. Others don't really care either way. It's always best to ask if you're not sure where she stands.

Adding Special Effects

Image editing software often gives you options for creating special effects. Used properly, these can create some very interesting images. Just be carefully not to

Color images are easily converted to black & white.

overdo the effects. Think about the finished product. The effects can be as simple as adding some softness or grain to the photograph, or as extreme as converting the image to graphic lines or a painting with broad brush strokes. While evaluating images, try to keep the possibilities in the back of your mind. Maybe the straight image isn't all that interesting, but perhaps it can be made into something that is unique by applying an artistic filter. The best advice is to have fun and experiment. Don't be afraid to discard attempts and start over.



Experimenting with special effects filters can create some interesting results.

Save Your Work

Once the images have been edited to your satisfaction, save a high-quality JPG or TIFF copy of the full-resolution file to your hard drive. You should also save a smaller 72dpi duplicate of the file to use online and in e-mails. After I finish editing the images from a shoot, I delete all of the originals from my hard drive—remembering, of course, that I have two other versions of the original files saved on an external hard drive and burned onto a DVD. If you leave all of your originals on your computer's hard drive, you can run out of space pretty quickly, especially if you shoot a lot of RAW-format images

Archive Your Images

After you have a good set of edited images saved onto your hard drive, I would again strongly urge you to make two additional copies of your edited versions. Burn one onto a CD or DVD and save another copy onto the external hard drive. It only takes a few minutes to make backup copies and it could save you many hours of work if you have a disk crash.

9. Learning and Improving

Although I really enjoyed my first experience photographing nudes at a workshop, I now look back at those images and realize that they are not very good. After many years of shooting nudes, I can now see so many things that could have been done better. Also, as I think back on the experience, there were many missed opportunities for photographs that I never took. I now realize the most important things I took away from that experience were enthusiasm for shooting nudes and a strong desire to improve.

Evaluate Your Images

One of the first things you can do to improve your work, is to evaluate the images from your previous shoots with a critical eye.

Identify What is Working. Look at your favorite images first. What do you like about them? Are they technically good (correctly focused, properly exposed with good color balance)? Are they aesthetically pleasing (creative ideas, well-composed, interesting)? Try to understand what is working for you and what you want to continue doing in your future shoots.

Determine What You Could Do Better. Consider what you could do better next time. Try to determine what didn't work as well as you would have liked. Examine the technical as well as the artistic aspects of the images. What could you have changed to improve the shot? Would shooting from a different angle have used the light in a more flattering way? Are there distracting shadows or hot spots? Is the exposure correct? What about the color balance? Look at the parts of the image that are in focus. Could the image be improved by having the background out of focus? Should more of the image have been sharp?

■ Try to determine what didn't work as well as you would have liked.

Next, look at the images with an artistic eye. What could have made them better? Perhaps you didn't utilize the setting to its full potential. Maybe there was a concept that could have been more fully explored. Also, consider how you worked with your model. Were all of her attributes fully utilized? Was there more you could have done with this model that may not be an option with another model? How is the composition? Was there a better way to position the

model? Could you have tried different points of view or more creative poses? Would the image be better if it showed more or less of the setting?

Having some unresolved issues after a shoot can be a positive thing. It provides a great reason to work with a model again or to shoot at a particular location another time. Perhaps you want to try an image idea again—but with a different twist. Some of my best images have come from less-than-fully-realized photographs from previous shoots. Every image you shoot and evaluate is an opportunity to learn and improve. Always ask yourself, "What could I have done to make this a better image?"

Reflect on the Experience

Be sure to consider the non-shooting parts of the day, as well. Did everything go smoothly with the model? Was she clear about where and when to meet? Was she ready for the shoot? Did she bring everything with her as agreed? If not, think about how you can improve your communications with the model.

Were you ready? Did you have all of the equipment you needed when you needed it? Was there more than enough storage on your cards or more than enough film? Were extra batteries available if required? Did you remember to bring the model release and a pen? Was your shooting script adequate to create the images you planned to shoot that day? Was there enough time to shoot, without feeling rushed? How was the light during the time of day you chose to work? Was it a fun and productive day for both you and your model? Any improvements in these areas can make your next shoot better.

■ Go back to the originals from previous shoots and take a look at the flow of the images.

Look at the Flow

Another good learning tool is to go back to the originals from previous shoots and take a look at the flow of the images. What do you see? Are you making corrections during the shoot? Did you notice that a pose was awkward and correct it? Should you have adjusted a light or altered your exposure? Did you work with your model to explore all of the possibilities of a concept? There are many lessons to be learned. An added bonus of reviewing your older shoots is that you may discover an image you skipped over during your first edit that is actually worth revisiting.

Get Feedback

Another way to improve your work is to ask others for their opinions. However, in order for that to be a useful learning experience, you have to carefully consider the people you ask. The people who are closest to you won't want to hurt your feelings, so they will likely always praise your photography, regardless of what they really think. Although positive comments are always nice to hear, they are not very helpful in advancing your work as an artist.

It is better to try to find someone who will be honest with you, even if their comments may be a little harsh. Try inviting some outspoken friends over and ask them to evaluate your work. Sharing a glass of wine or two before breaking out the images may help to elicit some more honest responses. Another suggestion is to have regular gatherings with fellow photographers to evaluate each other's work and to discuss recent shoots.

After evaluating your images and getting some feedback, plan your next shoot with an eye towards improving. Ask yourself what you can do better this shoot than you did last time, either technically or artistically. It can be a new image, or a better version of an image you've tried before.

Don't Be Afraid to Fail

It's easy to get stuck in a rut with your work and to keep shooting the same "safe" images over and over again. This is especially true if you frequently use the same models or shoot in the same locations.

If you want to grow as a photographer, or would like to create some unique images, you need to be willing to explore and experiment. That means that you have to be willing to fail on occasion. Trying something new may not produce the results you expected or hoped for—it may take several attempts with several models before you fully realize an image you've been struggling to capture—but you will learn something from each attempt, so keep trying.

Keep trying unresolved images. It may take many shoots, with several different models, before you finally realize an image that you've been struggling to capture

One of my favorite sayings is, "Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want." Take that to heart. I have many images that are failed attempts (let's call them "learning experiences"). Although I never show them to anyone, they were instrumental in helping me learn. In fact, when you experiment, *most* of your images will be "learning experiences"—but there may also be the occasional gem in the group.

Learn from Others

Attending a good workshop with an experienced photographer can be a great learning opportunity. You will usually get an honest portfolio review and some solid recommendations for improving your work. Group photo shoots can also be a good learning experience, as well as a good opportunity to shoot with new models. Find a good photographer and try to learn from them. Watch what they do and how they work with the models. Not only will you see behavior that you like and want to emulate, you may also see some ways *not* to do things. Take everything in and learn from it.

Look at other people's work as often as possible. Good and bad photographs are all around you. When evaluating what other photographers have done, try to figure out what you like and what you don't. Always

ABOVE AND FACING PAGE—*Use images by photographers whose work you admire as a starting point for you own images. The images seen above and on the facing page were inspired by Helmut Newton (facing page, top), Ruth Bernhard (facing page, bottom), and Edward Weston (above).*

look for new ideas and approaches you haven't yet considered. I'm not advocating copying other people's work; rather, use it as a source of inspiration. For example, you could use your favorite Helmut Newton or Edward Weston nude as a starting point for creating your own images.

Seek inspiration in other art forms. Frequent art galleries and keep an open mind. You never know when you'll be inspired by something truly unique. If nothing else, going to galleries is often a good opportunity to meet other people interested in art. If you strike up a conversation, you may even find a new model or a customer for your work.

Improving as a photographer takes effort and desire, but it can be a fun and rewarding experience.

10. Sharing Your Photographs

Most photographers—and probably most every artist—have a desire to share their work. Even if your primary motivation for taking pictures is to satisfy your creative urges and produce images to please yourself, it is still only natural to want others to see the results of your hard work. So how and where can you show your photographs?

Your Model

The first place to start is sharing your work with your model. Since she played a major role in creating the photograph, she will have a strong interest in seeing the results of her effort. Models really appreciate getting some images from the shoot and will often show your work to others. That will not only help to enhance your reputation and name recognition, but it can also be a great way to find new models. Several of my models were recommended to me by other models I have worked with. If a model asks for images from the shoot, that should be worked out ahead of time and considered a part of the compensation. Many models actually prefer images on a CD rather than prints. They usually have online portfolios (rather than a physical book), so they find the JPG files to be more useful. Even if images are not part of the deal, I will usually e-mail the model a few low-resolution JPGs, just so she can have something from the shoot.

■ The first place to start is sharing your work with your model.

Create a Portfolio

Once you have produced a solid body of work, you should create a portfolio to showcase your best images. Having a professional-looking, tightly edited portfolio is one of the best ways to show your work to others. It conveys a positive, professional image of you as a photographer and will help to instill confidence in others.

Print Portfolios. Many people have online portfolios, which I would certainly recommend, but there is something to be said for being able to hand a book of high-quality prints to someone. That interaction is much more per-

sonal and immediate than telling someone to look at your web site. You don't need a large number of images for a portfolio—ten to fifteen images is fine. In fact, a person can start to lose interest after looking at too many prints.

Online Portfolios. In the Internet age, having some type of online portfolio is essential. There will be times when you won't have the opportunity to show someone your photographs in person, but you can always hand them a business card with your web site listed. That way, they can look at your work at a later time. You can also leave your business cards at exhibits and post them on bulletin boards. You will be judged by the quality of your web site, so be sure that it has a professional look and feel, and that it showcases your best work. Also, be sure that you have a signed model release before you post any images of a model on the Internet. Even when I have a model release that clearly states that I can post images on the Internet, I still usually ask the model if she is okay with having nude images of herself on the Web, just as courtesy. Most models are excited by the prospect of having their work displayed. This is especially a concern for first-time nude models. If the model already has nude images on the Internet, she will rarely have an issue with this usage.

Submit Your Work to Galleries

The Internet is the easiest way to exhibit your photography, but there are other opportunities you may wish to consider. You could try submitting your work to photography galleries. Smaller or newer galleries are sometimes willing to look at work by emerging photographers. Even though your work may not get accepted, you may still get some valuable feedback from a knowledgeable gallery

Showing your work in local galleries is a great way to get exposure and to enhance your reputation.

curator. Just remember that any feedback is only one person's opinion. Take it for what it's worth, then move onto the next gallery.

If a piece does get accepted for exhibition in a gallery, you will need to make a large, high-quality print, and get it professionally framed. This can be a very expensive prospect, so be prepared—especially if several images get accepted. Exposure in galleries is extremely valuable and opening parties are a great way to meet and interact with like-minded people.

Display Your Work at Home

If you have some nicely framed prints, you can always exhibit them in your home. Several of my framed prints, which had been in previous gallery exhibits, now hang on my walls. It's a great way to show people my finished work. I also just enjoy being surrounded by my photographs. Be sure to hang framed prints at eye level so that people can see them more easily. Many people tend to hang prints too high.

■ If you have some nicely framed prints, you can always exhibit them in your home.

Enter Competitions and Juried Events

Another option is to enter competitions and juried events, especially if you can attend the judging and hear the comments. That kind of feedback is invaluable. Unfortunately, many juried competitions either accept your work or they don't, without any comments or feedback. Some organizations seem to be more legitimate than others, so do your research before entering any competition. They all have an entry fee, so you will need to decide if it's worth paying the money.

Get Published

If you want your work to be seen by a broader audience, you can try to get your images published in books or magazines. If you decide to pursue this route, prepare yourself for rejection. I sent proposals to many book publishers—over the course of a couple of years—before I finally found the right match. I have had a few images published in various magazines, but again, these reflect a small percentage of my actual submissions. It's difficult to determine what a potential publisher will like, so all you can do is to keep trying and don't get discouraged. Before submitting any work, be sure you know the publisher's submission guidelines. You also need to honestly assess if your photography is up to the standards used by that publisher.

Having your work seen may or may not be important to you. If it is one of your goals, you will need to be patient and persistent.

11. Ideas for Images

This chapter consists of some of my favorite photographs, with a basic description of the techniques used to create them. Feel free to use them as an inspiration to create your own images. The idea is not to copy them, but to use them as a starting point for your own work. Once you have established the basic shot idea, work with your model to make the images your own.

Get Inspired by the Location

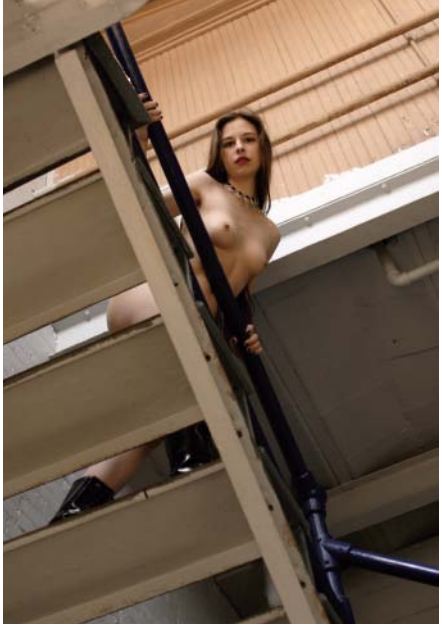
A good inspiration for image ideas is your shooting location. When shooting at an outdoor location, try to incorporate the elements of the place into your photographs—after all, that's why you are shooting there.

Things to look for can include landscape features like trees (especially old, uniquely shaped ones), bodies of water (such as lakes, streams, and waterfalls), and other natural objects (such as boulders and rock formations). Man-made objects (such as bridges, stairs, doorways, fences, railroad tracks, and walls) can all also work well. Even just open space itself can present possibilities. Look for a wide-open field or a meadow that seems to go on forever.

Lines can become powerful elements in your composition, so look for linear elements in the setting.

ABOVE (LEFT AND RIGHT)—*When shooting at a location, take advantage of the available features such as lines, frames, and perspective.*

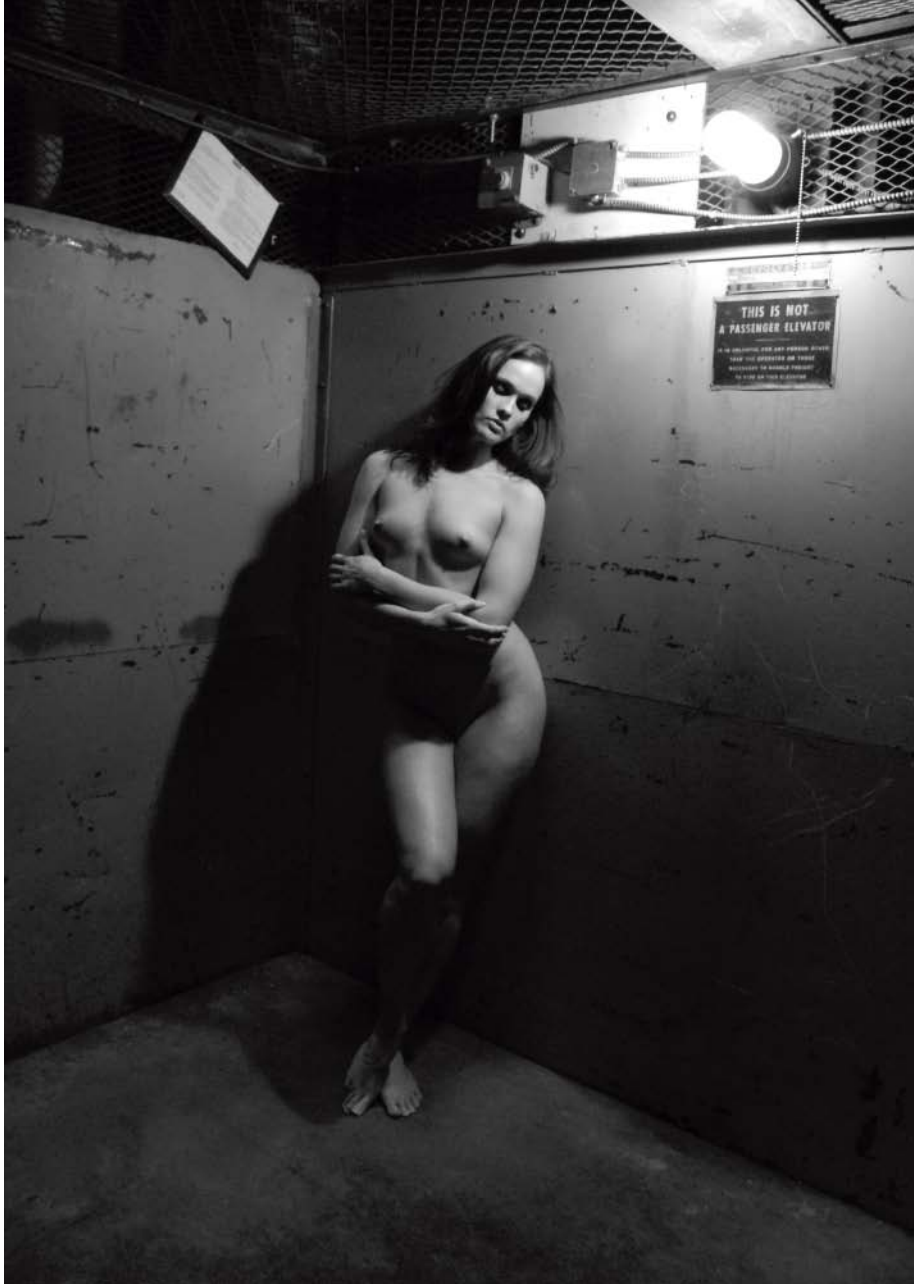
LEFT AND ABOVE—*The time of year can also be used as an element in your images.*



ABOVE—*Don't be afraid to experiment and get creative with settings.*

ABOVE—*An average house or apartment has many potentially interesting settings.*

RIGHT, TOP AND BOTTOM—*Using existing light will help to capture the real ambience of the setting.*



Consider features that can provide textures, shapes, and natural frames to enhance your photographs. The time of year can also be used as an element in your images—flowers in the spring, lush forests in the summer, and colorful foliage in the fall can be featured in your images. Even icy winter images are a possibility, if you can find a model willing to brave the elements. Just be sure to consider her comfort and safety when shooting in the cold. Have a warm blanket and hot beverages standing by, and work in short intervals.

An indoor location can provide many options for shooting locations. An average house or apartment has many potentially interesting settings. All you have to do is look around with an open mind. Picture how you could pose a model while incorporating the characteristics of the setting. Don't be afraid to experiment and get creative with settings. Using existing light will help to capture the ambience of the place, so try to use it whenever possible.

Keep Your Sense of Humor

Clichés can be fun to shoot so don't be afraid to indulge. When a pregnant model I was photographing in her home walked into her kitchen barefoot, we

LEFT—*Clichés can be fun—here, it's "barefoot and pregnant" in the kitchen.*

RIGHT—*"That's not exactly what I had in mind when I said nude photography."*

Shadows can be effective image elements, especially when shooting outdoors late in the day.

just couldn't resist taking a few "barefoot and pregnant" shots in the kitchen. I also had fun with a twist on nude photography during one of my recent shoots, as seen in the image on the facing page (left).

Experiment with the Lighting

Use Natural Light. My first studio was in the interior part of a building, so I had no windows. That eliminated the possibility of shooting with natural light. Luckily, my current studio setup gives me that option. Shooting with natural window light can be a great option when you are first starting out. One of the main advantages is that you can easily see the effect of the light on the model.

Unless you want strong distinct shadows, you should avoid shooting with direct sunlight.

Unless you want strong distinct shadows, you should avoid shooting with direct sunlight. It's best to choose a time of day when the lighting is indirect, or find a way to diffuse the light. Northern-exposure windows will provide consistent indirect natural light, but if that's not an option, cover your windows with translucent material to soften the light. My studio has western facing windows, so if I plan to use natural light, I try not to book those shoots late in the day.

To balance the window light and to fill in any unwanted shadows, use a reflector positioned on the opposite side of your model. Shadows can be effective for creating strong images, especially in outdoor shoots, so consider making them part of your photographs when shooting early or late in the day. The low

LEFT—A one-light setup is especially effective for dark, low-key images against a black background.

RIGHT—This image was created using a two-light setup against a white background. Even though this was shot on a white background, it actually looks gray in the image because there is no direct lighting on the background.

sun will also enhance reflections in water, which can be a nice element in your images.

Work with One Light. A lighting setup does not need to be complicated to produce great results. A simple one-light setup can be used to create some beautiful photographs in the studio. Some of my favorite images were shot with just a single light. The key to using one light effectively is the correct placement of the light.

A single light can be positioned straight on to the model, basically behind the photographer. This setup will give a two-dimensional feel to the image, minimizing shaping. It also tends to smooth textures—in fact, it's often used in beauty photography to make the model's skin look flawless. When using this type of lighting, you need to be aware of the model casting unwanted shadows on the background. Adjusting the position of the light can eliminate the shadow from your shot, as can changing your shooting angle. Using a dark background can help to minimize or eliminate shadows. Of course, a shadow could be used as an element of the photograph, but that should be a conscious decision.

In most cases, you will want to position the light to the side of your model so the lighting has a strong direction. This will introduce some shading, which in turn adds some shaping to the image. Again, you may want to use a reflector to fill in the dark side of the model. Without a reflector, the side of the model away from the light can go completely black. A one-light setup is especially effective for dark, low-key images against a black background.

Add a Second Light. Using two lights gives you more options than a one-light setup but requires more care to achieve pleasing results. Generally, one light is used as a main light and the second one is a fill light (used to make the shadows less dark). The fill light should actually be set up first, since the position and intensity of the main light will be based on the fill.

Here is a description of one possible two-light studio setup. Position the fill light high and toward the back of your studio, using an umbrella or softbox to diffuse the light. Set the output of this light to give a reading of f/5.6 at your model's position. Then, set up the main light at a 45 degree angle to the model, close to her position. Use a softbox on the main light to diffuse the light and adjust this light to give you a total exposure f/8. Manually set your camera's exposure to $\frac{1}{125}$ second at f/8.

Try High-Key Lighting. High-key lighting effects are popular with glamour photographers but can also be used effectively for artistic images. This setup

ABOVE—*This glamour image was shot using a high-key lighting setup.*

RIGHT—*This is an example of an artistic high-key image.*

is usually done with four lights and a white seamless background. Position your fill and main lights as you did for the two-light setup described in the previous section, then add two more lights on your background. Facing the background from your model's position, measure the light coming off the background, then adjust it to be the same as the light hitting your model from the front, in this case f/8. This high-key setup will isolate your model in space so the image becomes completely about her. Accessories such as shoes and jewelry can be used to enhance these shots.

Dancers are especially effective at coming up with poses that work well in silhouettes.

Other models can also create interesting silhouettes.

Silhouettes. Lighting for silhouettes is easy to set up and can be used to create some very striking looks. Basically, you just want to light the background and not put any light on the model. Dancers are especially effective at posing for silhouettes, but other models can come up with creative poses, as well. The key is to emphasize shapes and lines. Since there is really no color involved, silhouettes are usually done in black & white.

A bare bulb produces harsh, directional light.

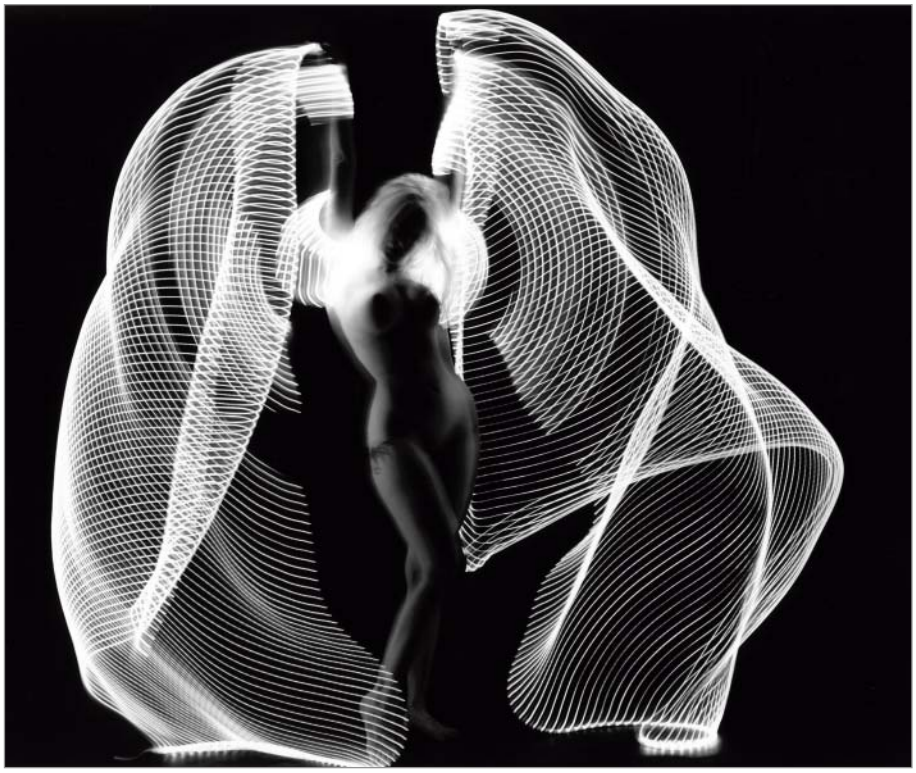
A handheld long exposure can add a sense of movement to a bare-bulb image.

Try Unexpected Light Sources. A variation on a single light is to use a bare bulb rather than a studio strobe. Try clipping a standard 150-watt incandescent light fixture high up on a light stand. Although the light may seem quite bright, your exposure will generally be rather long. You can either shoot with your camera on a tripod, or shoot handheld to create some blur caused by camera movement. Again, I prefer to shoot this style of image in black & white. Show your model the first few shots so she has a good idea of the concept and how the images will look.

A standard rope light from a hardware store can be used to create some interesting effects. You can wrap or surround the model with light. Experiment

A model lit by a rope light.

Movement with a rope light



Candlelight has a unique quality.

A fireplace can be used as a light source. Just don't get the model too close.

Use a flashlight to selectively "paint" your model with light during a long exposure.

with having her move to produce patterns of light. Since these lights consist of many small bulbs, the effect can sometimes be surprising.

Firelight has a unique quality when used a primary source of light. You can use candlelight, light from a fireplace, or even a campfire. Since these tend to be very low sources of light, your model will need to be fairly close to the fire. Obviously, you need to be careful and not get her too close so she doesn't get burned. Again, these will generally be long exposures.

Painting with Light. Painting with light is one my favorite techniques. The basic idea is to use a flashlight or other small light source as your "paint brush." Set up your camera on a tripod, then manually focus on your model (turn off

the autofocus). Set your camera to manual mode with a long exposure time—say, around 16 seconds. The ISO and f-stop are basically just a guess. Start with ISO 200 and f/8. Once everything is ready, turn off all of the lights in the room, trip the shutter and use your flashlight to paint in the parts of your model you want to be visible in the image. The more you paint in one spot, the brighter it will be in the image. It will probably take several attempts before you get a good feel for the speed and distance at which you need to paint. Also, be sure to not stand in one place too long as you paint, otherwise you could appear in the image. Adjust the exposure, if necessary, once you have seen the results of your attempt.

Multiple Images

Multiple images in the same shot can be used to tell a story. One method for achieving this is to shoot multiple exposures on the same frame. Another tech-

In "Ascent," multiple images can be used to tell a story.

nique, which I have found easier to control, is to place the camera on a tripod and leave the shutter open. Turn off all the lights and fire the flash multiple times during the same exposure. Have your model changes positions between each flash burst.

Zooming

Zooming in or out during an exposure produces a strong feeling of movement. Although I generally use that technique with the camera mounted on a tripod, you could also do it handheld to produce more blur. Determining the speed and amount of zooming is basically trial and error. You will probably need to experiment with several images to get a nice effect.

Movement

Movement can create very dynamic images. You can move the camera during the exposure or have your model move. You can try to freeze the movement or let it blur. Try having your model jump or dance or move around during the exposure. The movements can be big and bold or more subtle. There are many possibilities.

Change Your Point of View

A helpful exercise for finding interesting image variations is to walk around your model and look at the pose from different angles. Change your point of view. Lie on the ground and look up, stand on a chair and look down, get eye-to-eye,

Zooming your lens during the exposure can create a sense of movement.

ABOVE—Moving the camera to create a sense of movement.

TOP RIGHT—Freezing movement.

BOTTOM RIGHT—A long exposure on a windy day.

look at the pose from all sides. Sometimes the best image is not always the most obvious one.

You can also use your equipment to create variations. Get in really close with a macro lens and capture a previously unseen detail. Use a wide angle lens to distort proportions or a telephoto lens to compress distances.

You can capture a variety of images without ever having your model change her pose. Be sure to ask your model to hold her pose and explain that you want

Walk around your model and look at the pose from different angles.

Use selective focus to provide a unique point of view.

to explore it from all angles. Otherwise she may be inclined to change her position before you finish exploring all of the possibilities. (*Note:* Think about using selective focus by setting your lens at its widest aperture to produce a shallow depth of field.)

Show Emotions

If your model is good at expressing emotions through her poses or facial expressions, consider using that to create some powerful images. Think about the intent of the image and the emotion you are trying to express. Strong eye contact can be very powerful, but an aggressive or timid expression also reveals feelings. Emotion can also be expressed through the model's body language. Remember that it's okay to have a good time during a shoot and to capture some fun emotions, too.

Shoot Black & White

Consider shooting some images in black & white. Monochrome images have a strong graphic feeling that is usually associated with artistic photography. Shapes

Use expressions to show emotion.

Emotion can also be expressed through poses.

Black & white images have a strong graphic feel.

and lines become the dominant features, as the color palette becomes irrelevant. Although you can always convert a color image to monochrome, shooting in black & white mode will force you to think in different terms. Of course, if you are shooting film, you will need to decide what type of film to use before starting to shoot. Whenever I shoot film, it is exclusively black & white.

Some settings just seem to suggest black & white to me. Generally, these are places where there are interesting shapes and textures but the color palette is rather bland. Also, during the course of your editing, don't be afraid to say, "I wonder what this image would look like in black & white?" Give it a try and see what you think. That's another good way to develop your eye for black & white photography.

Manipulate Your Image

Image manipulation programs usually provide some special-effects filters. These can be used to enhance or totally alter an image. Manipulated images can be effective, but be careful not to overdo it. There are many cliché images out there, with colorized lips and eyes, fairy wings, etc. Try to use these techniques to create something unique that works with the captured image.

Try using special effects filters to create something unique.

Conclusion

The ideas and images in this book are just a starting point for your own work. The photographs that you can create are only limited by your own imagination. Don't be afraid to have fun and to try different approaches. Experiment with creative techniques and look for images as they present themselves. Learn from your experiences and keep shooting. That's the best way to learn.

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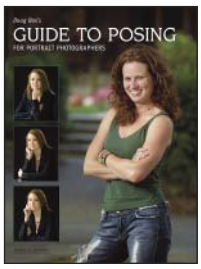

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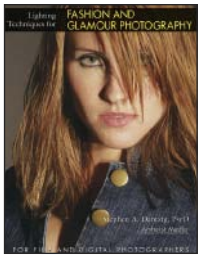

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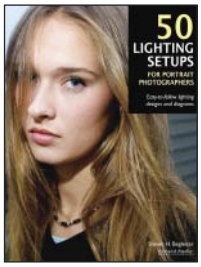

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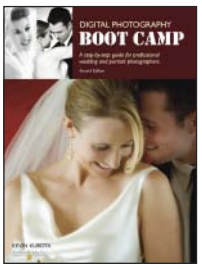

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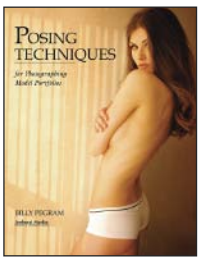

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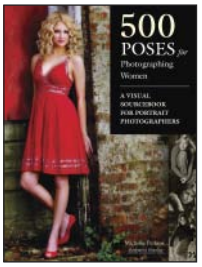

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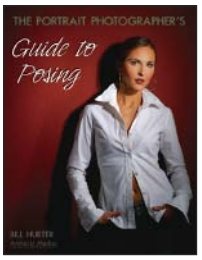

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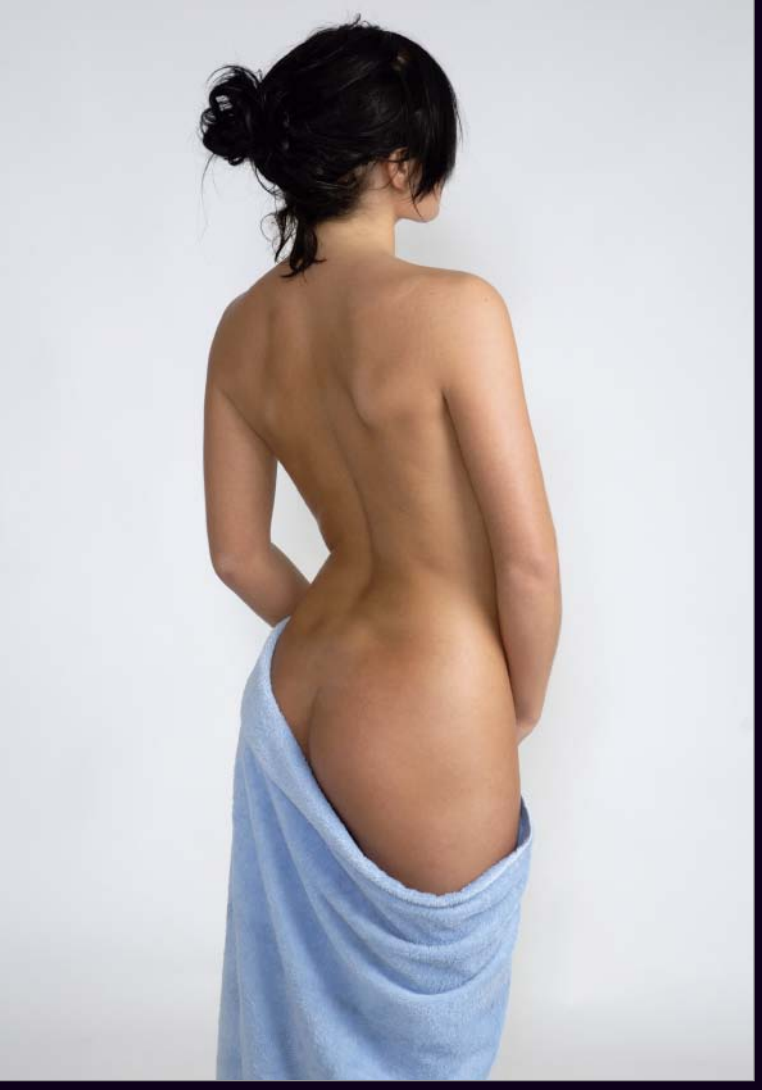

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ISBN-13: 978-1-58428-263-1
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